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MOREY HITS THE MARK. (See page 201.)



# In The Clouds For Uncle Sam

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Morey Marshall of the Signal Corps

BY

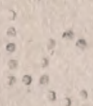
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**IN THE CLOUDS FOR UNCLE SAM**

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# In the Clouds for Uncle Sam

OR

Morey Marshall of the Signal Corps

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## CHAPTER I

AN EARLY MORNING GALLOP.

“Hey dar, come along. What’s detainin’ yo’ all?”

Two boys, one, a gaunt, long-legged, bare-footed colored lad, mounted on a lean mule, and the other a white lad, knees in and bestriding a fat, puffing, sway-backed mare, came dashing down a country road in Virginia.

“You black rascal!” panted the white rider, “what d’ you mean? Pull up!”

“I cain’t,” shouted the boy on the mule. “Ole Jim’s got de bit.”

“Bit?” muttered the other rider, noticing the mule’s rope halter and smiling. “I reckon Amos wants a race.”

Loosening his worn and dingy reins the white



boy drew himself together, took a fresh grip on an old fashioned riding crop and spoke to his mount.

“You ain’t goin’ to take the dust from a common mule, are you, Betty?”

As if she understood, the laboring mare, already wet with foam, and with nostrils throbbing, sprang forward.

“Out of the way!” shouted her rider. His light hair lay flat on his bare head and his arms were close by his side. “Mules off the road for the old hunter!”

Like a flash the boy on the mare passed the plunging, clattering old Jim and his humped-up rider. But only for a moment. Proud Betty, once the pride of the late Colonel Aspley Marshall, the hunter that took the dust from nothing in western Virginia, had seen her day. Old Jim came on like an avalanche.

“Cain’t stop dis beas’, Marse Morey. Git outen de way, Marse Morey, we’s needin’ de road.”

Hanging about the neck of the mule, Amos, the colored boy, opened his mouth, flashing a row of white teeth on Morey’s sight. The young rider knew that Amos was laughing at



him. He set his square jaw and leaned forward over the old hunter's neck.

"Betty," he whispered, patting the soft, silken coat of his laboring animal, "for the honor of the stable we used to own—*go it!*"

And Betty tried—her nostrils now set, her head and neck forward, and the light young rider firm but easy in his seat.

"Can't hold him, eh?" shouted Betty's rider as the mule drew alongside.

Amos was digging his bare heels into old Jim's ribbed sides and lashing like mad with the end of his bridle rope.

Morey saw that he was beaten in a flat race, but he did not surrender.

"Race you to the barn," he cried as Amos' kicks and lashing forced the plow mule once more to the front, "and over the front gate."

"No sah! No sah!" trailed back from Amos. "Dis ain't no fox hunt. Dis am a plain hoss race. Not ober de gate."

"The first one over the gate," insisted the white boy, now falling well behind.

Amos turned but he did not show his teeth.

"Look hyar, Marse Morey! What you talkin' 'bout? Dat ole Betty ain't jumped no gate sence you all's pa died. Yo'll break yo' fool neck."



Morey only smiled. The two animals beat the hard highway with their flying feet.

“Yo’ all’s on’y jokin’, Marse Morey,” pleaded the alarmed colored boy, as the racing steeds came to the dirt road leading through what was left of the Marshall estate, and headed toward the ramshackle old gate a quarter of a mile away. The dust rolled behind the galloping horse and mule. Amos turned and shouted again:

“Pull up dat ole plug. She cain’t jump a feed box. Yo’ all gwine break bofe yo’ necks.”

The only answer was a wave of Morey’s riding crop and a toss of the smiling boy’s head.

“Out of our way, boy!” sang out Morey. “Over the gate—”

“Hey, Marse Morey! Hey dar! Take yo’ ole race. I’s jes’ jokin’. I ain’t racin’ no mo’,” and throwing himself backwards on old Jim the frightened Amos pulled out of the race. But Betty, the stiff and crippled old hunter, had her mettle up, and Morey made no effort to stop her. With a laugh and a wave of his hand at the alarmed colored boy as he dashed by, the cool young white lad gave the proud mare her head.

At the half-broken gate the trembling animal, throwing off for a moment the stiffness of years,



came to a mincing pause, gathered her fore feet beneath her and rose. Up in the air went Morey's hands and his father's old crop as Betty's fore feet cleared the top panel. Then—crash! On the uncut grass of the door yard tumbled horse and rider.

“I tol' yo'! I tol' yo'!” shouted Amos as Betty struggled clumsily to her feet. “Marse Morey,” he added, rolling from old Jim's back, “is yo' hurted?”

There was a dash of red on the white cheek of the prostrate Morey but in another moment he was on his feet.

“I ain't hurt, you rascal, but the next time you turn that old plow plug loose against Betty I'll break your black head.”

“Yas sah, yas sah,” snickered Amos. “She sho' was gwine some!”

“Rub Betty down and then give her a quart of oats.”

“Yo' mean turn her in de fiel'!”

“Has she been fed this morning?”

“Dey ain't no oats. We's out ob oats.”

“Tell your father to order some.”

“I reckon he done ordah cawn an' oats but dey's slow bringin' em. Dey's slow all de time. I done been borrowin' oats offen Majah Carey.”



“Well,” exclaimed Morey proudly, “don’t you borrow any more oats from Major Carey!”

“Why,” exclaimed Amos, “we been gittin’ fodder offen’ Majah Carey all winter—all de while yo’ been to school. Dey’s so slow bringin’ oats from town dey don’t never git hyar.”

“Did my mother tell you to go to the Carey’s for horse feed?”

“Fo’ de lan’ sake, chile! you don’ reckon my ole pap gwine to bodder Miss Marshall ’bout oats and cawn! He jes’ tells me to go git ’em and I done go git ’em.”

A peculiar look came into the face of Amos’ young master. But Morey said nothing. Waving his hand to the solemn-faced colored boy to care for the animals, he started across the long, fragrant June grass thick about the dingy plantation home.

But trouble sat lightly on Morey Marshall. Before he and the shambling Amos were many feet apart the young Virginian paused and gave an old familiar soft whistle. The slow-footed colored boy stopped instantly, and then, as Betty wandered at will into a new flower bed and the lean mule walked with ears drooped towards the distant horse sheds, Amos hurried to Morey’s side.



“Amos,” said Morey, “are you busy this morning?”

The colored boy looked at his white companion in open amazement.

“I said,” repeated Morey, “are you *busy* this morning?”

Amos was not exactly quick-witted, but, in time, with great mental effort, he figured out that this must be a joke.

A sparkle slowly came into his wide-set eyes and then his long, hollow face grew shorter as his cheeks rounded out. His lips parted in a curved slit and his white teeth shone. He laughed loudly.

“I reckon I’s gwine be purty busy. Ma’m Ca’line done tole me to sarch de hen’s nes’. On’y,” and he scratched his kinky head, “on’y I ain’t had no time yit to git de aiggs.”

“Well, I’ll help you with that. How many hens are there now?”

“Fo’. But one’s a rooster.”

“How many eggs do we get a day?”

“Ebery day two—sometimes. Des’ fo’ yo’ ma’s breakfus’.”

It was Morey’s turn to laugh.

“Pa’s done made ’rangements to lend us six pullets from Majah Carey.”



“To borrow six hens?”

“Sho’. We done borrow’ chickens mos’ ob de time—fo’ de aiggs. But we don’t keep ’em. We always takes ’em back—mostly.”

“Mostly?” roared Morey.

“Shorely,” explained Amos soberly. “We’s pa’ticlar ’bout dat. But we done et one of Captain Barber’s ole hens. She was too fat an’ lazy—didn’t git us one aigg.”

“Was this all for my mother?” queried Morey, his face clouding again.

“Yo’ ma don’ know nothin’ ’bout de critters. Pa, he paid Captain Barber fo’ de ole hen we et.”

“That’s right.”

“Yas sah, yas sah. I done took him a dozen aiggs ma sef. Wha’ fo’ yo’ laffin’, boy? Da’s right.”

“What I wanted to know is, have you time to go fishing this morning? How about that trout hole up at the bend of the creek?”

Amos’ smile gleamed again like a white gash.

“Ole Julius Cæsar, de king trout? Ain’t nobody cotch him yit. But he’s got ’bout a million chilluns. Say, boy,” whispered the colored lad, “I done reckon Miss Marshall had her breakfus’ by dis’ time. An’ dem aiggs ain’t gwine to spile



whar dey is. I's git yo' ol' rod and yo' ol' flies, an' say, I's go one dat ah made mase'f. Dat fly's fo' ol' Julius Cæsar an' you. Say," he concluded, looking wisely into the clear blue unclouded sky and wrinkling his sober brow, "I spec's we bes' be gwine 'long. Pears to me like rain."

"I'll meet you in a half hour by the tobacco shed," exclaimed Morey.

Again Amos' brow lowered and he shook his head.

"Ain't yo' ma tol' you?" he asked.

"Told me what?"

"Dey ain't no shed no mo'."

"No shed!" exclaimed Morey, looking quickly toward the far end of the old plantation.

"Why, what's become of it?"

"Captain Barber, he done tote it away."

"Captain Barber moved it away? Why, what right has he on my mother's place?"

"I dunno. But he tooked it away."

"When?" exclaimed Morey excitedly.

"When?" repeated Amos. "Da's when he fit pa and call him 'ol' fashion nigger better wake up.'"

Morey caught the colored boy by the shoulders.



"I didn't know your father ever had a fight with our neighbor."

"Not ezackly no fight, kase Captain Barber he wouldn't do nothin' but laugh."

"But what was it all about?"

"Pap done call him a liar."

"Your pap ought to be hided. Captain Barber is a white man."

"Yas sah, yas sah. But he *is* a liar."

Morey smiled again.

"Do you know what he lied about?" he asked. Amos drew himself up in indignation.

"Didn' he go fo' to say he bought de' ole fiel' whar de baccy shed was? An' ain't dat a big lie? Yo' ma owns all dis ole plantation 'case pap says she do. But he tooked de house. He ain't buy dat lan', is he?" concluded the simple colored boy.

Morey stood in deep thought. But at last, his voice quavering, he said:

"I don't know, Amos—I hope not."

Morey had returned home that morning after a winter in school at Richmond and a visit to his uncle in New York State. To him the old house appeared much the same, and his mother was in no wise changed. With her he had as yet had no talk over the affairs of the plantation and,



after his morning coffee, he had hurried with Amos to the village two miles away on an errand. The hints that Amos had dropped unconsciously startled him, but the sky was blue, the air was soft, there was the smell of mint in the neglected grass and he was but eighteen years old.

“Meet me where the barn used to be,” he exclaimed suddenly and, turning ran toward the house.



## CHAPTER II

### BREAKFAST ON THE GALLERY.

Aspley Place, once the center of a large estate and the scene of much hospitality in Colonel Aspley Marshall's lifetime, was now surrounded by a farm of less than two hundred acres. Mortimer, or "Morey" as he was always called, and his mother, had been left dependent upon the estate at Colonel Marshall's death three years before. At first it was not known that Colonel Marshall was financially involved. But his debts almost consumed his supposed enormous and valuable tobacco plantation. Out of the settlement Major Carey, his executor, saved for the widow and her son the home. But it and the little farm immediately about the house was mortgaged to Major Carey himself, who from year to year renewed the notes for borrowed money.

On these few worn and almost exhausted acres a faithful retainer, an old negro, Marshall or "Marsh" Green, who had been Colonel Marshall's servant from babyhood, made desperate



efforts to provide a living for his mistress. He and his boy Amos Green lived in the sole remaining cabin of the old quarters, where, in the time of Colonel Marshall's father and in the days when Amos Green's grandfather was a boy, there had been a street of log huts beneath big oaks, and a hundred slaves might be counted. Marsh Green and his boy now lived in a cabin patched with store boxes, beneath a roof mended with flattened lard tins.

It was now many a day since the Marshalls had killed their own hogs, and as for the old oaks, Colonel Aspley himself had sold them. In truth, Morey's father was neither a successful farmer nor a frugal business man. He believed in the past, was a kind parent and husband, had his mint juleps regularly, lived up to his patrimony and left for Morey nothing more than the recollection of a chivalrous and proud father, a mortgaged plantation, old Marsh Green and fat Betty, his hunter.

But these things Morey neither knew nor understood. Mrs. Marshall had a vague belief that what she called her "private fortune" would amply care for her and for Morey's education. She neither knew the amount of this nor her real income. In fact, this fortune, left to her



by an uncle, was a meagre five thousand dollars, and the \$250 it produced annually, which Captain Barber's bank at Lee's Court House collected and held for her, was always overdrawn.

It was by Captain Barber and Major Carey that Mrs. Marshall's taxes were looked after, her insurance cared for and her notes renewed from year to year, and she lived on in dignity and pride with little understanding of how the money came. Nor did she even suspect how much was due to the ceaseless efforts of Marsh Green.

"Colonel Aspley's overseer," she always said in referring to the faithful Green.

"Mrs. Marshall's hired man," said the newcomers who were turning old and historic tobacco fields into fruit orchards and vegetable gardens.

But Marsh could hardly be called a "hired" man. If he was "hired" it was without pay. All the money that the white-haired negro saw came from the vegetables he grew that "the place" did not need. And these were as much the property of old Marsh as if the plantation were his. Mrs. Marshall did not even think of the matter. Twice a year she and Marsh and



Amos drove to Lee's and the colored servitors were clothed.

The fall before, Morey, with much ceremony, had been forwarded to a school for boys in Richmond, famous both for its excellent curriculum and its high tuition. The bills for this had been met by Captain Barber as long as the little account in his bank warranted. Then came the inevitable.

On a day late in the winter Captain Barber and Major Carey, freshly shaven and carrying their gold-headed canes, drove slowly up to Aspley Place. Mammy Ca'line received them. In the musty old parlor, where Colonel Marshall's picture in his red hunting coat glared down upon his old time friends, the nervous committee twirled two shiny canes.

Mrs. Marshall was not an old woman. Her veneration for the past was not based on any love for long gold chains, earrings, or corkscrew ear curls. There was something a little faded about her appearance but it was not in her hair, nor in her face. Perhaps it was in the gown she wore, but this neither the Captain nor the Major saw. Mrs. Marshall's neighborly greeting, her courtesy, preserved with many other graces from the days of the old régime, her smile of



peace and content, disconcerted the visitors.

“Madam,” began Major Carey at last, “theah is a little mattah—a trifle—but, ah, a mattah that we feel bound, Madam, to lay befoah you.”

“Ouah respect, Madam, foah yo’ husban’, the late Colonel Marshall, who was ouah friend,”—added Captain Barber.

“The regard we hold fo’ his memory and fo’ you and yo’ son Mortimer,”—went on the Major.

What they had come to say to Mrs. Marshall was that, in her circumstances, Mortimer could not be sent away to a fashionable school; that he could not hope to play the role of a gentleman, that the farm was non-productive and should be sold, that Mortimer, now a young man, should set about earning a living, and that she and her son ought to purchase a cottage in the nearby village where they might live on a reduced scale and dispense with the unremunerated services of old Marsh and his idle, lazy, hungry son.

But no such suggestions were made.

Mrs. Marshall listened to the explanation of her financial straits undisturbed. Where the agitated visitors expected tears and despair they found a paralyzing calmness.



“I regret to say, my dear Madam,” concluded Major Carey at last and with a dry throat, “that you now owe Mortimer’s school four hundred dollars, and the bill is so long overdue that they are, ah, becoming even impertinent.”

“I really thought it had been paid,” said Mrs. Marshall in her low, soft tone and looking at her banker, Captain Barber, in an injured way. The Captain only wiggled in his chair. He even dismissed the idea he had had of telling Mrs. Marshall that she had already overdrawn her account one hundred and eighty dollars. “Haven’t I some funds out at interest?” continued their hostess.

“I think you have about—”

Mrs. Marshall smiled and raised her still plump hand.

“Please don’t bother about the details,” she added hastily. “You have always been so good as to look after my business. I will take it as a favor if you will realize out of my funds whatever is needed to cover this obligation. I prefer to sacrifice my private fortune rather than encumber the family estate which, of course,” and she smiled comfortably, “is to be preserved for Mortimer.”

The two visitors could not look at each other.



They sat silent and aghast. The "family estate" had been reduced to less than two hundred acres of worn out and almost unsalable tobacco land. Even this was mortgaged and Major Carey had been carrying the obligation for years. He had not even received a cent of interest since Colonel Marshall's death.

"Certainly, Madam," stammered Captain Barber at last, rising. "Just as you wish."

"Mrs. Marshall," said Major Carey bowing, "when Master Mortimer returns from school will you have him do me the honor to call upon me?"

"With great pleasure," said Mortimer's mother, "although the poor boy is not coming directly home at the close of school. He will first visit his uncle Douglas in Hammondsport, New York. And, by the way, Captain," she added, turning to the flustered planter-banker, "I'm afraid his wardrobe may require replenishing and he will need a little pocket money. Will you kindly send him a hundred dollars and charge it to my account?"

There was no help for it. If she had been a man the thrifty banker would have been adamant. To the widow of his dead friend he only bowed.



“At once,” he answered politely. Then he added: “Madam, I trust you will not think me impertinent. But what are your plans for your son’s future?”

“Colonel Marshall was a tobacco grower,” she answered proudly. “The Aspley plantation has known nothing but tobacco for a hundred and fifty years.”

When Major Carey’s old buggy—he did not own or use an automobile—had creaked down the weed-grown Aspley Place private road to the highway and the unhinged gate had been dragged into place, Captain Barber turned to his companion.

“If Mrs. Marshall’s son hasn’t any more business sense than his mother the Barber Bank is going to have a tidy sum to charge up to profit and loss. We’re two old fools. What do you want to see the boy about?”

Major Carey grunted. “I’m goin’ to tell him what his mother *deesn’t* know—that she isn’t worth a cent and *that* he must go to work and care for her.”

This was in March.

On the *day* in June that Morey reached his home, *raced* with Amos, arranged to go in quest of “*old Julius Cæsar*” and his many “chilluns,”



and then made his way free-hearted and devoid of care over the unkempt lawn toward the house, there was no thought in his mind of money, debts and little of the future.

“Aspley House” hardly merited such a formal title. The building itself was of wood, two stories high and long since denuded of paint. But the gallery, or porch, in front seemed part of some other architectural creation. The floor of it was flush with the yard and of brick, worn and with sections missing here and there. The columns, unencumbered with a second story floor, were of great round pillars of brick. They had once been covered with cement, but this coating had now fallen away and the soft red of the weather beaten bricks was almost covered with entwined swaying masses of honeysuckle.

Beneath these blossoming vines Morey’s mother awaited him.

“I saw it,” she exclaimed anxiously. “I’ve seen your poor father do the same. You are not hurt?”

“Hurt?” shouted Morey as his mother put her arm about his neck and wiped the blood from his face with her lace handkerchief. “I’ve forgotten it. Breakfast ready?”

In a fragrant, shaded corner of the gallery,



where the brick pavement was reasonably intact, sat a little table. On the snow-white cloth rested a bowl of flowers. At two places thin, worn silver knives, forks and spoons glistened with a new polish. But the "M" had nearly disappeared from them.

"Say, mater," laughed Morey, proud of his newly acquired Latin, "why don't you fix this pavement? Some one's going to break his neck on these broken bricks."

"It should have been seen to before this," his mother answered. "And I really believe we ought to paint the house."

"Looks like a barn," commented Morey, attacking a plate of Mammy Ca'line's corn bread. "This some of our own butter?"

Mrs. Marshall looked up at the fat smiling Mammy Ca'line, beaming in her red bandanna.

"Mammy," asked Mrs. Marshall, "is this some of our own butter?"

"Ouah own buttah!" exclaimed the grinning cook, maid and all-around servant. "Fo' the lans' sake, Miss Marshall, we ain't made no buttah on dis place sense ole Marse done gone, fo' yars come dis fall."

Mrs. Marshall sighed.

"Why don't you?" snapped Morey with a



tone that reminded his mother of his dead father.

“Why don’t we?” laughed old Ca’line. “I reckon you boun’ to have cows to make buttah—leastways *a* cow. Dat ole Ma’sh Green don’ keep no cows no mo’.”

Morey laughed.

“Runnin’ on the cheaps, eh?”

But his mother only smiled and sipped her coffee.

As the hungry, happy boy helped himself to one of the three thin slices of bacon, old Ca’line leaned toward her mistress and said, in a low voice:

“Miss Ma’shall, dat’s de lastest of dat two poun’ of salt meat.”

Mrs. Marshall smiled again.

“Have the overseer go to town this morning, Ca’line, and lay in what supplies are needed. Have we any fowls on the place?”

“Yas ’um, dey’s fowls, but dey’s only ‘aiggers.’ Dey ain’t ‘eaters.’ ”

As Mrs. Marshall looked up in surprise, Morey experienced the first serious moment of his life.

“It’s one of Amos’ jokes, mater. I understand. I’ll tell you about it after a bit.”



“Amos is really very trying at times,” was Mrs. Marshall’s only comment.

“As for meat, Ca’line,” went on Morey gaily, “don’t bother. Amos and I are going for trout this morning. We’ll have a fish dinner today.”

“Your father was very fond of trout,” exclaimed Morey’s mother. “I’m so glad your’re going. By the way, Mortimer, the first day you find the time Major Carey wants you to call. He’s very fond of you.” Then, thoughtfully, “Have you any engagement this evening? We might drive over late today.”

“That’s a go,” exclaimed Morey, springing up, “unless the fishing makes me too late. Pleasure before business, you know.”

As old Ca’line shambled down the wide hall she shook her head and mumbled:

“His pappy’s own chile! An’ dat’s what took de paint offen dis house.”



## CHAPTER III

### MOREY MEETS A FELLOW FISHERMAN.

Mrs. Marshall's home fronted the west. Always, in the distance, like a magic curtain ready to rise and reveal a fairyland beyond, hung the vapory Blue Mountains. Round about, like long fingers, the rough mountain heights ran down among the century-old plantations. Ridges, pine-grown and rocky, and here and there tumbling rivulets gave variety to the long, level reaches of tobacco land.

A little creek, finally trickling into the north part of the Rappahannock river, skirted what had once been the east boundary of the old Marshall plantation. In days long gone, before the forests thinned and while the mountain sides were thick with laurel, ash, and oak, the creek plunged lustily in and out of its wide and deep pools and went bounding musically in many a rapid. But now, even as the Marshall acres had thinned and disappeared, the woodland stream had dwarfed and shrunk until it was little more than a reminder of its former vigor.

Yet, by all the Marshalls it was remembered



as the place where Colonel Aspley had "whipped the stream for speckled beauties" like a gentleman; it was still Aspley Creek, and Amos was not the only one who believed trout might still be taken there. It was not surprising, therefore, that Lieutenant Fred Purcell, of the U. S. Army, should on this day drive twenty miles from Linden to try his luck there.

Why this keen-eyed young officer, and many other soldiers who were not officers, were seen so often in the little railroad town of Linden, few persons knew. But to this place he had come, when the snows in the mountains were disappearing in March, with a few brother officers and a squad of privates and much strange baggage. Mules and wagons followed a few days later and then the new arrivals disappeared. There were many theories. Generally it was agreed that it might mean an expedition against "moonshiners" or illicit distillers. More conservative gossips predicted that it was a party of military engineers. The local paper ventured that the war department was about to locate a weather observatory on the mountains. One thing only became, gradually, common knowledge—that the soldiers were in camp near Green Springs, in Squirrel Gap, ten miles back



in the foot hills and that the officers came every few days to the Green Tree Inn, in Linden, to eat and smoke.

Morey, rising from the breakfast table, was almost on Mammy Ca'line's heels

"Mammy," he shouted, "where's my old fishin' clothes?"

The fat old negress turned and then, embarrassed, exclaimed:

"Yo' ma done say yo' don' want dem ol' pants no mo'. She gib all yo' ol' garmen's to Amos."

"Everything?" laughed Morey, looking down at his second best trousers. "I'm goin' for trout. I can't wade in these."

Old Ca'line shook her head.

"I reckon yo' ma gwine get yo' new clothes. Yo' old clothes is Amos meetin' pants."

"Amos!" yelled Morey, rushing through the wide hall and out into the rear yard. "Amos!" he called, hurrying toward the tumble-down cabin of the Greens. "Gimme my pants! My fishin' pants!"

The sober-faced colored boy was just emerging from the single room in which he and his father lived, with a bit of clothes line around his shoulders to which was attached an old,



cracked, and broken creel, and carrying in his hand a long-preserved jointed casting rod.

"I say," repeated Morey, half laughing, "Mammy Ca'line says Mother gave you my old fishing clothes. Produce—I want 'em."

The colored boy looked up, alarmed.

"Ah—ah," he stuttered. "Dem's my own clothes. Dey's my onliest meetin' pants."

"I should say not," roared Morey. "Mother didn't know what she was doin'. Fork 'em over! I can't go into the water in these," he added, pointing to the trousers he had on. "These ain't *ready-made*," he went on proudly; "they ain't boughten. I got them from a tailor in Richmond."

Amos eyed the new trousers with interest and admiration. Then his lip quivered.

"Marse Morey," he whimpered, "yo' ma done gib me dem pants las' Chrismus'. I speck's she don't 'low I's gwine part wid dem. Dey's a present."

"Look here, boy, don't make me mad," retorted Morey. "Turn over my pants or we don't go fishin'."

Amos' whine ended in a sob. He hesitated and then broke out: "Yo' ma gib 'em to me. But—" His voice dropped to a whisper.



"Marse Morey," he said, coming close to the frowning white boy, "I's got fo' bits I made pickin' berries fo' Miss Carey—"

"Morey's voice did not change but a smile seemed to hover about his clean-cut lips.

"Look here, nigger," he exclaimed suddenly, "do you want those pants worse than I do?"

"Wuss!" whimpered Amos, "I jes' natchally got to hab 'em. I done promised dem pants to Miss 'Mandy Hill."

"Promised my pants to a girl?"

"Yas sah," explained Amos soberly. "'Mandy and me's gwine to de camp meetin' Sunday to the Co't House. I promise her long time ago I's gwine wear dem pants when we does."

"Ah, I see," laughed Morey at last, "well, don't disappoint 'Mandy."

When the two boys left the cabin and cut across the old tobacco field it would have been hard to tell which was the raggedest, Amos with his patched blue overalls, almost white from constant washing, or Morey clad in old Marsh Green's working corduroys.

At the ruins of the old tobacco shed Amos paused, looked at Morey a little sheepishly and then, from under a few protecting boards, drew



out an old torn seine about five feet long, attached to two thin saplings.

Morey's face flushed at once.

"What you doing with that seine, Amos?" he exclaimed severely.

"What I doin' wid dat?"

"You've been seining trout, you black rascal."

"Cross my h'at, no sah. Deed I ain't. No sah."

"What have you been doing with it?"

"Well sah, some says dey is and some says dey ain't. But, ef yo' ain't no salt meat, suckers is good eatin'."

"Suckers!" snorted Morey. "You all ain't been seinin' and eatin' suckers?"

Amos nodded his head.

"You never eat none o' Mammy Ca'line's sucker chowder?"

Morey turned up his nose in disgust.

"Can't mostly tell no difference 'tween Ca'line's chowder and reg'lar fish," the black boy went on appealingly.

As they neared the creek Morey said:

"Amos, if I ever catch you takin' a trout with that net I'll thrash you."

As Morey went on and the tall colored boy



looked down on his slender companion, his hollow, mournful cheeks rounded into what was almost a smile and he muttered to himself:

“I reckon dat boy been livin’ high and mighty down to Richmond. Suckers is gittin’ ’tas’ good to me sence Marse Aspley gone.”

Morey left the tobacco field and took the old meadow path to the big bend above—Julius Caesar’s domain and the best part of the creek. Amos took the road to the ford, two bends below and about an hour’s fishing from the big pool. If Julius Caesar existed outside of Amos’ head Morey could not prove it. With what skill he had he fished the pool, waited ten minutes and went over the same water again without a strike. Then he advanced slowly down stream. In three quarters of an hour only two trout did he hook, neither of them a fish to be proud of.

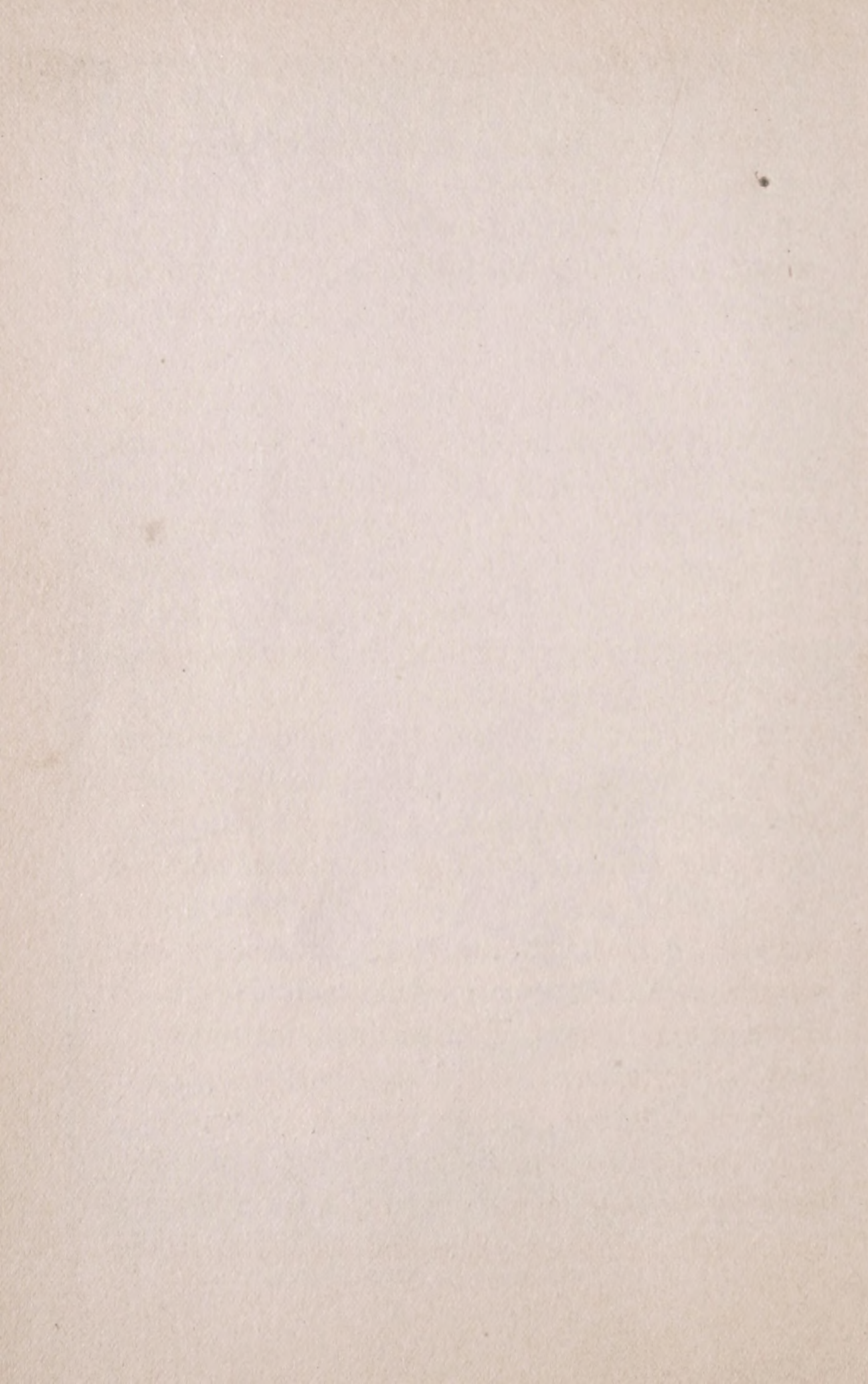
When he reached the ford where Amos should have been waiting for him there was no sign of the colored boy and the sun was high overhead. Ten minutes later, wading softly down the cool and shady little stream and almost lost in the sportsman’s absorption, his fly shooting forward swiftly and silently over each eddy and likely log, he was suddenly aroused by a quick splash and a violent exclamation.





AMOS STRUGGLED TO FREE HIMSELF,







Just before him, and struggling in the middle of the stream, were two persons. Amos, who was one of them, almost prostrate in the shallow water, was struggling to free himself from the grip of a man about thirty-five years old.

“You black rascal,” exclaimed the man. “What d’you mean. Seinin’, eh? Take that!”

At the word he planted the flat of his hand on the black boy’s back. As Amos fell flat in the stream and rolled over in the water there was a splashing behind his assailant. The man turned just in time to see Morey, his ragged, baggy trousers wet and impeding his progress, plugging furiously forward.

“Oh, you’re his pal, eh?” laughed the man. “Well, come on and get the same. I’ll teach you young whelps to know better. I’ll—.”

But he neither had time to administer the same nor to finish his speech. The agile Amos with the water running from his clothes and mouth, had recovered himself and with head down lunged forward. The next instant both boy and man were locked together and almost submerged in the sluggish current.

As they rolled over and over Morey made desperate efforts to stop the struggle. But he only complicated matters. Slipping, he fell upon the



two combatants. Cold water, however, is a great cooler of angry passions. Without knowing just how it happened, in a moment, the man and the two boys were standing in mid-stream, sputtering and gasping for breath. Morey still gripped his rod, the man was glancing dejectedly toward his own broken pole, now well down the creek and Amos was gripping a moss-covered rock dug up from the bed of the creek.

"I suppose you know you are trespassing on private property?" began Morey, forgetting, in his indignation, that the creek no longer was a part of his mother's plantation.

The man, shaking himself, turned as if surprised.

"This boy is my servant. Have you any explanation to make?"

The man's surprise increased to astonishment. After another look at Morey's ragged garments he fixed his eyes upon the lad's face.

"He was seining trout—" began the stranger indignantly.

"Da's a lie," exclaimed Amos.

"He was fishing for suckers," explained Morey.

"Look in his pockets," retorted the stranger. Morey hesitated a moment.



“My name is Mortimer Marshall, sir, of Aspley Place. This boy is my mother’s servant. He—”

At that moment Morey saw a suspicious movement of Amos’ hand.

“Amos,” he exclaimed sternly, “come here!”

Slowly the black boy splashed forward, the rock still in his hand, but with one cautious eye on the stranger.

Morey ran his hand into the colored boy’s pocket and drew slowly forth a still flopping three-quarter pound trout.

“Fo’ de lan’s sake, Marse Morey, who done put dat fish in dar?”

The man did not smile.

“I’m really sorry, my boy, that I struck you. I’m a great lover of this sport and I lost my head. I apologize to you. And to you,” he added, turning to Morey.

Morey turned again to Amos.

“Where did you get that trout, Amos?”

“Cross my ha’t, Marse Morey, I reckon dat fish done swum in ma’ pocket. Trouts is cute fishes.”

Morey picked up Amos’ seine, still tangled among the rocks, and grasping the rotten sticks to which it was attached, he broke them over



his knee. Then he pointed to the bank and Amos crawled dejectedly ashore.

“My name is Purcell, Lieutenant Purcell, of the United States Army,” said the stranger.

“I am glad to know you,” replied Morey reaching out his hand, “I am fond of fishing myself.”



## CHAPTER IV

### A SECRET AMBITION REVEALED.

As Lieutenant Purcell and Morey clambered out on the bank the military man began laughing heartily.

"I suppose they are a pretty wide fit," remarked Morey holding out Marsh Green's loosely hanging trousers with one hand.

"I was laughing at my mistake in thinking you were a 'pot' fisher," explained the soldier. "But I'd known if I had seen your rod—it's a beauty."

Morey handed Lieutenant Purcell his father's old split bamboo, silver ferruled, and colored a rich brown from long use.

"Since we caused you to lose your own rod I want you to take mine," said Morey promptly. "It is a little heavy and old-fashioned but it has landed many a fine fish. It was my father's."

"Your father is dead?"

"Yes sir. My mother lives—Aspley Place is our home."

"Well, I want to shake hands with you, sir,



and to say again I am heartily sorry I lost my head. Losing my rod serves me right. I couldn't think of taking yours. It's a beauty," he added, taking the rod in his hands.

"But I want you to," exclaimed Morey. "My father was a sportsman. He loved his horse, rod and gun. I don't know what Amos meant. I reckon it's the first time a trout was ever taken out of Aspley Creek in a net. I'll feel better if you'll take the rod. If you don't," he added, his eyes snapping, "I'll take it and break it over that nigger's back."

Amos, skulking within earshot—the rock still in his hand—hurried away among the pines.

"I insist that the fault was all mine. But I'll compromise. I am stationed near Linden, some miles from here, on special duty. It was a long drive over here and a man will be waiting for me some miles down the stream. I'd like to fish the creek down to my rendezvous. If you lend me your rod I'll send it to you tomorrow."

"At least," said Morey, giving ready assent, "you will consider yourself as having at all times, for yourself and friends, the use of the creek. And when you are nearby," he continued, pointing among the trees toward the west,



“my mother will be glad to have you call at our home. A real fisherman will always find a welcome there. I’ve got better pants at home,” laughed Morey.

The soldier shrugged his shoulders and laughed in turn. Then he lifted the lid of Morey’s broken creel and saw the two small trout. In turn he exposed his own catch—seven beautiful fish, one weighing at least a pound and a quarter. Before Morey could stop him the lieutenant had dumped his own string into the boy’s basket.

“With my compliments to your mother, my boy.”

The pride of the Marshalls rose in the water-soaked, ragged boy’s heart.

“On one condition, sir; that you will take dinner with us this evening.”

The man hesitated.

“Not today, thank you. I’m deuced glad to meet a son of one of our old families—I’m a Virginian myself—but, not today.”

“You are stationed at Linden, you say?”

“For a time. I may leave any day. If I do I hope we may meet again. Won’t you take my card?”

He handed Morey a card reading: “Lieutenant



tenant Fred Purcell, U. S. Signal Corps, Fort Meyer, Virginia."

"It will be a favor to me if you'll take the rod," insisted Morey.

"The obligation is all mine," insisted the stranger. "And, if we meet again I hope I can find opportunity to return the favor in some way."

When the two finally parted company Morey had little reason to suspect how much that statement meant, nor how soon he was to avail himself of Lieutenant Purcell's kind offices.

A half hour later Morey reached his home and entered the musty, quiet horse lot. There was hardly a breath of air and the sun lay on the place with almost midsummer heat. A few chickens pecked in silence but no other living thing was in sight. Until then the boy had not realized how desolate and run-down was the place where once the activities of a busy plantation centered. There were hardly signs even, of the farm implements that had rotted away for years. The yard seemed abandoned.

With a little lump in his throat the boy hurried forward, his long, ragged trousers gathering new dust and weight as he did so. As he climbed the broken-down fence and got a view



of the big, paintless, loose-boarded house beyond he almost sighed. But there at least were flowers and he could hear the hum of bees among the hollyhocks by the garden fence. There he could see Marsh, his old hat well down on his head, bent over his hoe, as the colored man rose at times among the rank weeds. Beyond the garden patch, in the low meadow, he could see, too, old Betty and Jim the mule. Amos was not in sight.

“Old Marsh is getting pretty careless,” said Morey to himself. “There’s a good many things he ought to do around here. Lazy niggers,” he mused.

It did not occur to Morey that he might do some of these things himself. Such had not been the lad’s training. With another sigh he made his way to Marsh Green’s cabin. Never before had it looked so poor and desolate.

“Marsh ought to fix up his old place,” Morey muttered. Then he turned and looked at the big house. The wide shingles, green with moss, were missing in many places. The big chimney, with one side of the top missing, stood like a monument to the departed glories of other days. On the grey-green roof a few chimney



bricks lay where they had fallen. But, around the far corner where the gallery showed, the honeysuckle, crawling over the columns and roof, hung a deep green curtain of new fragrance. And, through the crookedly hanging shutters which were the color of dead grass, he saw fresh white curtains.

For the first time in his life the sight of the bricks on the roof annoyed Morey. With a sharp reprimand on his tongue he was about to call to the busy Marsh when a sound fell upon his ear. There was some one in the cabin. Stealing around behind the crumbling shack Morey cautiously approached it and peered through a crack. Amos, crooning to himself, was standing in the middle of the hard, clay floor with Morey's Richmond trousers held up before him in his outstretched hands.

Amos' eyes were set. On his solemn black face there was a look of longing. His temptation was too great. Squatting on the floor the colored boy emptied the contents of the trousers' pockets on the clay; seventy-five cents in money—dimes, nickels and a shining quarter—Morey's key ring, a silver pencil case, note-book, handkerchief, rubber eraser and his new pocket knife, the last thing he had bought in Richmond.



Each thing the colored lad fondled, felt and smelled. Then he opened the knife, tested it and held it off at arm's length. Gradually he returned each object to its place, the knife last of all. He sprang to his feet, and Morey was just about to call out, but stopped. The black boy, giving way to temptation, plunged his hand again into a pocket of the trousers and pulled out the new knife. He shoved the knife into his own pocket and dropped the trousers where Morey had left them.

Chuckling to himself, Morey, a few moments later, sauntered into the cabin.

"Amos," said Morey, "did that man hurt you when he pushed you over?"

"Push me?" said Amos. "He done hit me wid his fis'."

"Did he hurt you?" persisted Morey, doffing Marsh's unwieldly trousers.

For answer Amos produced and exhibited the mossy boulder that he had carried from the creek.

"Don' mak no diffunce 'bout dat. But ef dat man ebber comes dis way," and he shook his head belligerently, "yo' don' need ast him no sich quesson. He ain't gwine to be hurted—he gwine to be kilt—da's right."



“Anyway don’t stab him,” said Morey putting on his own trousers.

“I ain’t no stabbin’ colored boy,” began Amos with dignity, “an’ I ain’t gwine hit no pusson when he ain’t lookin!”

“Good. Never do any thing behind another man’s back.”

The colored boy shifted a little uneasily but Morey only laughed and said no more. As the two boys passed out of the cabin Morey pointed to the distant home.

“Amos,” he said, “why don’t you get up there and take those bricks down?”

“Yo’ ma don’ tell me to take no bricks down. How I gwine to git ’way up dar? ’Sides, I ain’t got no time—.”

“Well, I tell you—”

“Miss Marshall, don’ tell me—.”

“Git, boy!” snapped Morey nodding toward the house.

But Amos hung back, digging his toes into the dust, with a defiant look on his face. Morey began to feel in his pockets and his face assumed a puzzled look.

“I reckon I must have dropped my new knife in the cabin,” said Morey, turning back.

There was a swift pat-pat of bare feet and,



as Morey glanced over his shoulder he saw Amos in a cloud of dust loping at the top of his speed toward the house.

Morey followed the flying colored boy who in a few minutes was scrambling up the kitchen roof. Mammy Ca'line was in the kitchen ironing and singing softly to herself. Throwing the now stiff trout on a table Morey said:

“Here you are, Mammy, trout for supper.”

“Ain't you all gwine to Major Carey's dis ebenin'?”

Morey's jaw fell. He had forgotten about the proposed call.

“Anyway,” he said, “we aren't going there for supper.”

“Wha' fo' yo' gwine den? Yo' ma' she always stay fo' eatin'.”

“Where is mother?” asked Morey.

“Sh! sh!” whispered Mammy Ca'line, “yo ma been gettin' her beauty sleep, chile.”

“You cook the fish, Mammy; we'll go after supper.”

The old colored woman looked up with a shrewd smile.

“Yo' all bettah go 'long to Major Carey's tomorrow, lessen yo' git 'nother mess o' fish. Major Carey ain't gwine to turn no one way



from de table. De Carey's has fish when dey wants dem. We all has 'em when we kin get 'em.''

Morey grew thoughtful. But, passing on into the hall he made his way lightly upstairs, that he might not disturb his mother, and entered his own little room.

It certainly looked restful, after his days' activity, and throwing himself on the big, high-posted bed, he prepared to rest. But Morey was not used to passing the daylight hours thus and in a few minutes he was up and busy. His unpacked trunk was before him and he squatted on the floor beside it.

About five o'clock Mrs. Marshall, fresh and smiling, dressed in white and with a spray of honeysuckle in her dress, softly opened the door. On the floor, fast asleep, lay Morey. About him, in the direst confusion and disorder, were books, circulars, catalogues and newspaper clippings. The floor was littered with what had apparently been the principal contents of the boy's trunk.

Mrs. Marshall picked her way among them; automobile catalogues, price list of motors, advertisements of balloon manufacturers, descriptions of aeroplane and dirigible balloon motors; newspaper clippings relating to airships and



their flights; motor-boat pictures. By the unconscious boy's arm lay a paper backed volume, "Aeroplanes; their Manufacture and Use." Not less than fifty such items constituted the litter on the floor.

Mrs. Marshall touched Morey on the forehead. He sprang up, rubbed his eyes and yawned.

"Is this your school library?" asked his mother, laughing.

"Some of it," answered Morey soberly. "I borrowed the rest."

Mrs. Marshall looked surprised.

"Does this interest you?" she went on, picking up a picture of a revolving gyroscopic motor as if it were dynamite.

"Interest me?" exclaimed Morey. "I reckon it interests any one in my business."

"Your business?"

"Surely. That's what I'm goin' to be."

Mrs. Marshall could only look at him, dazed and bewildered.

"Haven't had time to tell you," smiled Morey. "I'm an aviator. I'm going to make an aeroplane this summer."



## CHAPTER V

### A VISIT OF CEREMONY.

“You don’t mean to tell me you don’t know what ‘aeroplane’ means?” almost shouted Morey, when he saw from his mother’s look that she was puzzled. “Well, I’ll be—”

“Mortimer!” exclaimed Mrs. Marshall with as much sternness as she ever used.

“Mater,” he laughed, “you certainly are behind the times.”

“What does it mean?” she asked placidly.

“I suppose you never heard of ‘aviator’ either?”

“I’ve heard of ‘aviary’. I believe that has something to do with birds.”

“Right! Though I never heard of an aviary,” added Morey, partly to himself. “It is a bird. It’s a human bird. An ‘aviator’ is a man who drives an aeroplane.”

“And this—this airy—?”

“Mother, sit down,” answered Morey in despair, “and I’ll begin your aeronautical education.”

For the next quarter of an hour Mrs. Mar-



shall dodged and parried verbal volleys of airship talk. Beginning with hot air balloons Morey led his mother along through a history of aerounautics until he came to aeroplanes. And then, not satisfied with the bewildered condition of his patient parent, he began with the dreams of the enthusiast.

“In war and peace, in commerce and pleasure, from the Pole to the tropics, these human birds will darken the air on pinions swifter than the eagle’s wing. The snow-crested peaks of the Himalayas, the deepest recesses of the tropic wilderness, the uncharted main and the untrodden ice of the hidden Poles will unroll before the daring aviator like the—like—the—”

“The pictured pleasures of the panorama,” continued his mother, pointing to the underscored page of the “History of Aeroplanes” which she had been holding during Morey’s discourse.

“Yes,” said Morey, blushing, and then recovering himself. “Anyway, that’s my plan of a career. I’m going to be an ‘aviator’. And I’m going to begin at the bottom. I’m going to start by making an aeroplane right here—out in the old carpenter shop.”



“Mortimer, I suppose I am just a little hind the times. Is this a desirable thing?”

“Beats the world.”

“Have you been studying this at school?”

“ ’Taint in the course, but everybody’s studying it.”

“When did you interest yourself in such a peculiar subject?”

“Oh, ages ago—long before Christmas,” answered Morey. “I’ve read all the books in the public library at Richmond and all the magazines, and I’ve got all the circulars I could find. All I want now is a set of tools and some spruce lumber and some silk and an engine—I can do it. Needn’t fear I can’t.”

“And these things,” suggested Mrs. Marshall, her smooth brow wrinkling just a trifle, “do they require any considerable outlay of funds?”

“Well,” said Morey—hesitating a little now—“The tools won’t cost much, but I wanted to ask you about the engine. Of course,” and he put his arm affectionately about his mother’s shoulders, “I know it isn’t just as if father was with us, and I ain’t figuring on the best engine. I would like a revolving motor, that’s the newest



thing, one with a gyroscopic influence, but that costs a good deal."

"How much?" asked his mother taking the illustrated price list of engines that Morey handed her.

"Twelve hundred dollars."

His mother gasped and the circular dropped from her hand.

"I thought myself that was too much," quickly exclaimed Morey, puckering his lips. "But, mater, I'm not going to be extravagant. I've arranged for a cheap one, a second-hand one. It's at Hammondsport. I saw it when I was visiting at Uncle's."

His mother sighed, looked for a moment out toward the ruined and ramshackle barn and then, with a new smile, asked indifferently:

"And the price of this—approximately?"

"This one," answered Morey, proudly, "is a real Curtiss six-cylinder, and it's a regular aeroplane engine. It's cheap, because the man it was made for didn't take it. Cousin Jack knows a boy who works in Mr. Curtiss' shop. I saw Mr. Curtiss about it myself. It was such a bargain that I—I—well I bought it."

Mrs. Marshall breathed a little heavily and rearranged her dress.



"You didn't mention the price," she said at last, patting Morey's hand.

"Only four hundred dollars!"

His mother laughed nervously. "I'm afraid my boy is a little extravagant," she remarked slowly.

"Do you know what that engine's worth!" exclaimed Morey. "It's worth \$800 any day."

"Well, I suppose the young men of today must have their amusements. Your father's was horses and hunting. But it did not interfere with his business as a planter. I trust you will not become extreme in the fancy. It must not be carried too far."

"Too far? I'm not going to do anything else until I get rich."

"Nothing else? You mean no other amusement?"

"That's not amusement; it's business. It's going to be my job."

"You mean along with tobacco planting?"

"I should say not. What, me a farmer? Tobacco is played out."

"Mortimer Marshall!"

"You don't think I'm going to be a planter, do you?"

"Mortimer!" Mrs. Marshall was erect in her chair, her cheeks pale.



“Why, mater, I had no idea that you felt that way. You don’t mean that I’m to come back here and take old Marsh Green’s place. I can’t grow tobacco. I don’t know how and I don’t want to. Young men don’t do those things nowadays. They get out and hustle.”

“Mortimer, your father was a planter from boyhood until he died. His father was one and his father’s father. Aspley Place has grown tobacco for one hundred and fifty years. In Virginia it is a gentleman’s life.”

“No, mater” answered Morey in a low and kind voice. “It was. But it isn’t now. You love this place—so do I. But I’ve been out in the world, a little—you haven’t. Things have gone on all around us and we didn’t know it. I can’t be a tobacco planter. I won’t.”

Mrs. Marshall’s lips trembled but she said nothing.

“I’ll go to school, mater; I’ll even go to college if you like. But then I want to go to an engineering school. After that I’m going to make you famous. I’m going to make the perfect flying machine. Then we’ll move away from this old place—”

“Mortimer!” quivered his mother. “From Aspley Place? Your father’s home? Never!”



Then, with an effort, she became calm. Rising, as if both hurt and indignant, she exclaimed:

“My son, I am your mother and your guardian. I have my own plans for your future—your father’s plans. From now you will dismiss these ideas. I shall countermand your foolish purchase or ask your uncle to do so. This summer you will spend with me. You will return to your school and then to the University. When, in time, you graduate and are able to do so you will return here and assume charge of the patrimony bequeathed you by your father. Meanwhile, Mr. Green will remain in charge.”

And leaving Morey standing crestfallen among the jumble of books and papers, his mother walked sadly from the room.

It was the first time Mortimer had ever been balked in his life. For six months he had thought and dreamed of nothing else. His pride was hurt, too, for to his cousin Jack, in Hammondsport, he had outlined carefully the exact details of his future plans. He had managed to secure an invitation from Jack Marshall to visit Hammondsport soon after his investigation into aeroplane and airship affairs had revealed to him that in that little town Inventor



Curtiss had his motor shop and aeroplane factory and that other balloon manufacturers and experimenters had collected there in sufficient numbers to make it the aeronautical center of America. There he had seen real dirigible balloons, had met and talked with Carl Meyers, the oldest balloon navigator in the country, had witnessed flights of the Curtiss aeroplane, had gazed upon the renowned Professor Graham Bell, had lounged for days about the mysterious and fascinating shops and factories, and, best of all and most unforgettable, had tasted the joys of gliding on the kites and planes of the various aeronautical experts.

Then he recalled the mocking laugh of his uncle.

He was a stubborn boy, but—he did not know whether he was a disobedient one. In all his life he had never been tested. Flushed and sick with disappointment he caught up his precious books and circulars and was banging them into the trunk when the door opened and Amos stuck his head into the room:

“Marse Morey, yo’ ma says yo’ all gwine ober to Marse Major Carey’s soon as yo’ has yo’ supper. An’ yo’s to put on yo’ bestest cloe’s an’ slick up.”



Bang! went "Aeroplanes, their Manufacture and Use." It missed the colored boy's head and crashed against the door jamb.

"Here, you black rascal," shouted Morey, red in the face and full of anger, "come back here and give me my knife, you thief!"

But the accusation was lost. Amos was on the long stair rail shooting to the bottom like a sack of wheat.

When the old-fashioned supper bell clanged out in the hall below, Morey, white of face, marched downstairs and into the dining room in silence. At the humble board with Morey's trout, almost the only dish, on the snowy white cloth before her, sat his mother, also pale, but with her usual smile. A look of surprise swept over her face as she noticed that Morey had ignored her orders.

"The evening is very agreeable," said his mother softly. "It will be light for some time. Major Carey has asked you to come and see him. We are going immediately after supper. I have ordered out the carriage."

"Won't tomorrow do?" said Morey sharply—and then he was sorry.

"If you prefer," answered his mother. "Your trout are delicious."



“Oh, I’ll go tonight,” said Morey, ashamed of his anger.

“The Careys are our oldest friends,” went on his mother, smiling again. “I had hoped you would look your best. When Major Carey does me the honor to appear in our home he comes clothed as a gentleman. He carries his gold-headed cane. His linen is immaculate.”

“It won’t take me but a minute,” said Morey, crowding back a tear of mortification but disposing of a couple of crisp trout nevertheless. “I’ll be ready as soon as you are.”

He was about to dash from the room when he turned, hastened to his mother’s side and kissed her on the cheek.

“That’s a good boy, Mortimer. I’m glad you realize that I know best.”

While Morey was making his hasty toilet he heard a creaking sound outside. Rushing to the window he was about to break out into laughter. Then he stopped and a little flush came into his face. Slowly advancing along the road from the stable lot was his mother’s carriage. It was the old surrey that his father had once used in transporting the hounds to the distant meets. Paintless, its bottom gaping, its top cracked and split and its wheels wobbling, it groaned forward



toward the mounting block at the end of the gallery. To it was hitched fat Betty, sleek and shiny with rubbing. The harness used only on such occasions, still withstood the final ravages of time, for on one bridle blinder shone one glittering polished silver M—old Marsh's pride and joy.

What had amused Morey was the sight of the old servitor, "Colonel Marshall's overseer," Marsh Green. His shoes were shining, and a fresh white shirt showed resplendent beneath his worn coat, but the old man's chief glory was his battered silk hat. By his side rode Amos, splendid in his shoes and Morey's trousers—his "meetin' pants."

What had brought the flush to Morey's face was the sudden thought: "the Careys do not come to Aspley Place in such a turnout." And, for the first time in his life, Morey felt ashamed of the old home and its surroundings.



## CHAPTER VI

### MOREY LEARNS HE IS A BANKRUPT.

Major Carey's mansion in the village of Lee's Court House connected that old-fashioned, white-housed settlement with the plantations lying about the town. It was of red brick, square and solemn, with a slate mansard roof. In front, four gigantic white wooden columns stood like towers. Unlike the Aspley house, these columns—very cold in a coat of new paint—carried an upper gallery or balcony extending the width of the house. And at the left end of the lower gallery a slender circular stairway, concealed behind a trellis of green slats and partly covered with ivy, led to the upper balcony. Immense oak trees afforded shade in what had once been an extensive dooryard.

But the village, which was not wholly asleep, encroaching on the place, had eaten off sections of the old yard on each side. What the Carey home had been at one time, while tobacco growing had been profitable and before Major Carey had begun to devote himself to banking and



money lending in town, might be seen from the little windows on the roof. From this elevated point an observer might see that the oak trees in the yard had once extended in two long rows half a mile from the front gallery, marking the old plantation drive. New streets had cut across these and only the tops of the mighty oaks could be made out stretching through the growing town.

It was almost dusk when Amos Green, stiff in his heavy shoes, sprang from the surrey and admitted Mrs. Marshall and her son through the gate into the Carey grounds. Major Carey, his wife, and Mrs. Bradner, their married daughter, whose husband was the cashier in Captain Barber's bank, were sitting on an iron settee along the driveway, near the house.

The arrival of Mrs. Marshall was almost sensational. The Careys marched alongside the "carriage" to the horse block and Major Carey like a cavalier assisted his guests to light. Mrs. Carey kissed her girlhood friend, and Major Cary saluted her with a profound bow, but for Mrs. Bradner there was but a light grasp of the hand. The former Miss Carey had married a man whom no one knew, a bank clerk from the



West with no other recommendation than his sobriety and industry.

To Morey the call was wearisome in the extreme. He reported on his school experiences, carefully omitting his aeronautical studies, and his mother exchanged with Mrs. Carey old-fashioned, stilted gossip concerning their homes and servants. Mrs. Bradner, in a beautifully made tailor gown, sat quietly by. When Morey saw how cheap his mother's dress appeared in comparison with Mrs. Bradner's, the thoughts that had troubled him all day came back again.

Then there were refreshments and the formality relaxed somewhat.

"Major Carey," said Mrs. Marshall suddenly, "I really wish you would talk to Morey. I'm afraid the boy has got some queer ideas in Richmond. However," and she smiled kindly toward the somewhat embarrassed Morey, "perhaps it is unnecessary now. He has promised me to forget them."

Major Carey smiled graciously.

"Well, boys will be boys, I'm afraid," he began. "But just what form of—well sir, what are you up to now?" he asked, turning to Morey.

The boy's embarrassment increased.



“Mother thinks I’m a farmer,” he said with an attempt at a smile. “I can’t agree with her.”

“But,” interrupted Mrs. Marshall graciously, “perhaps we ought not bother our friends with these family details. Especially since Morey now sees that he was wrong. He has agreed with me to finish the full course at his present school, to take a university training and then become one of us again.”

“To take charge of Aspley plantation?” asked Mrs. Carey.

Mrs. Marshall nodded her head with a satisfied smile.

“And what had *you* planned?” exclaimed Major Carey, who did not seem to join in Mrs. Carey’s and Mrs. Marshall’s satisfaction.

“I was willing to finish my schooling,” answered Morey soberly, “and I’ll even spend four years in the university if my mother likes, but I want a technical training. I want to understand airships. I meant,” and he looked at his mother covertly, “to become an aviator if I couldn’t become an inventor.”

“You mean this new-fangled aeroplane business?” asked Major Carey.

“I’m very enthusiastic over it,” went on Morey,



“Do you know, Major, the boy actually wants to build an aeroplane at our home this summer. And just when I know he needs rest and recreation.”

Major Carey had risen and was nervously toying with his heavy gold watch chain. Before he could speak, Mrs. Marshall added:

“He has even purchased a—some machinery of some kind—to go in it.”

Major Carey’s hand dropped from his cane.

“But he has given up the idea, you say?”

Mrs. Marshall waved her hand toward her son who sat nervously twisting his hat.

“I’ll give it up if I have to,” said Morey, further abashed, “but I don’t know what I’ll do with my motor engine. I’ve ordered that and I reckon it’s on the way.”

“These engines are rather expensive, are they not?” continued the Major quizzically.

“Oh, that depends,” answered Morey, “a new one is. This is a cheap one, second-hand. It cost only four hundred dollars.”

“You haven’t paid for it, have you?”

Morey looked up, shook his head and fell to twirling his hat again.

“I’m going to suggest that he countermand the order,” said Mrs. Marshall. “It really



seems to me a piece of extravagance. What do you think, Major?"

Major Carey's jaw had dropped and he was looking at Mrs. Marshall and Morey as if in deep thought. Recovering himself suddenly he made an effort to smile and then said:

"Perhaps," he muttered. "Yes, I agree with you."

"There, now," exclaimed Mrs. Marshall in gay humor. "You see Major Carey quite agrees with me. If you could only persuade him, Major, that he should follow in his father's steps—"

The banker-planter coughed and resorted to his watch chain again.

"Perhaps Morey and I had better have a little talk alone," he answered at last.

"If you would be so good. Business always hurts my head," laughed Morey's mother. The old Virginian bowed again and slipped his arm in Morey's. Down the long brick walk they strolled until the last iron settee was reached. Major Carey, perspiring, had hardly seated himself when he exclaimed:

"Morey, how old are you?"

"Eighteen, sir, last month."

His companion nodded his head.



“My son, your father was my best friend. Your mother has as fine and sweet a nature as any woman in Rappahannock County. But she has no more business sense than your old Betty.”

Morey started in indignant surprise.

“And, in many ways, you resemble your mother.”

“What do you mean, Major Carey? What have we done?”

“What did you mean by ordering a four hundred dollar steam engine?”

“It isn’t a steam engine; its a Curtiss gasoline.”

The elder waved his hand in impatience.

“Who is going to pay for it?”

Morey’s surprise turned to indignation.

“Perhaps that is our affair, Major Carey.”

“Your affair!” snorted the old man breaking out at last. “Morey, it’s time for you to know the truth. It’s bad enough for your mother to fool herself. That’s her nature. But you are almost a man. Neither you nor your mother has the money to pay for this extravagance.”

“I thought”—began the boy.

“You have not thought right. I am your mother’s friend. Four months ago I determined



to tell her she was worse than penniless. She is involved in debt. Aspley place is mortgaged—”

“You mean we are poor?” asked Morey, in a quavering voice. “I don’t mean that—I know we are poor. But that we owe people money we can’t pay?”

“I tell you the truth,” went on Major Carey, “only because you’ve got to get some sense into your head. Your mother is heavily involved. Your place is carrying a heavy debt. Your purchase of an engine is worse than foolish—it is shocking.”

The proud boy’s head fell on his breast.

“It won’t make matters easier for you to go on this way. I can’t make it easy for you. You make it hard yourself by not suspecting.”

“I’ll send word not to ship it,” said Morey, not even yet realizing the whole truth.

“Don’t you understand, Morey?” Major Carey exclaimed. “That isn’t the trouble. It’s every thing. You can’t go to school, you can’t take years to educate yourself. You’ve got to go to work—now.”

The white-faced boy rose to his feet.

“Oh, that’s it, is it? Well I’m not scared. That’s what I am ready to do.”

“And you’ll have to give up your home.”



“Give up our home? Why?”

“The people who hold your father’s notes and the mortgage are ready to foreclose and take the place.”

“Give up Aspley Place?” repeated Morey, the tears coming into his eyes.

His father’s old friend nodded his head slowly and tremulously wiped his face.

“Major Carey,” said Morey with a throb in his throat, “that would break Mother’s heart. She can’t do that.”

“The sooner you realize that it must be, the better for both of you.”

“Was there any way to prevent this?”

The old Major sighed.

“It isn’t your mother’s fault, Morey. And it isn’t yours. It all began a long time ago.”

“You mean—?”

“Your father was not a good business man. He was a gentleman and my friend—”

“We don’t have to discuss him, do we, Major Carey?” exclaimed the boy with a new-born glint in his eye. The flush of confusion and the tremor of alarm seemed to have gone from Morey.

Major Carey was startled by the sudden change.



"What do you think we should do?" went on the lad and he was beginning to feel like a young man.

"Your mother has a little money of her own that will keep her from want. I and others of her friends believe she should give up the plantation and rent a cottage in the village. You must go to work and help support her."

"Major Carey," said Morey in a low voice, "of course you know what you are saying. But I can hardly believe it."

"Morey, your mother is bankrupt."

The boy bowed his head for a few moments.

"How did this happen?" he exclaimed suddenly.

"It is a long story—perhaps you are not old enough to understand."

"I'm old enough to have to understand."

"It was your father. He mortgaged the plantation. After he died your mother could not even pay the interest on the borrowed money."

"To whom do we owe this money?"

Major Carey moved a little uneasily.

"To the Barber Bank, principally."

"To any one else?"

Again the old Virginian squirmed.



"Your mother has given me notes for unpaid interest."

"To you and Captain Barber?" repeated Morey, sitting up and looking at the man beside him.

"Yes."

"And you and Captain Barber will own our home?"

"It would naturally be that way."

"How much do we owe you?" asked the boy suddenly and leaning forward in the evening gloom.

Major Carey coughed and arose nervously.

"More than you can repay, my lad. More than I like to say."

"But I'm going to pay it," said Morey in a desperate voice, laying his hand on the Major's arm to detain him. "I don't know how, but I'm going to do it. You think I'm a fool. I have been. If I hadn't been soaked full of ideas that I got from every one around me I'd have known. And don't you believe I got 'em all from my mother. I got 'em from everything and everybody around here. But I understand now. I might have understood long ago if I hadn't been living the life every one lives around here."



"Careful my boy. Remember, it is to your friends that you owe much."

"And I thank them," retorted Morey angrily. "To those who have loaned us money I'll repay every cent. How much do we owe you?"

"What I have told you is for your own good," was Major Carey's only reply. The old Virginian's indignation was rising.

"Major Carey," almost sobbed the boy, "don't take offense. But why didn't you tell me this long ago?"

"I tried to tell your mother, but it wasn't possible. I'm sorry she has to know."

For a moment the man and the boy stood in silence. Then Morey extended his hand and made a brave effort to smile.

"We won't tell her—not just yet—Major Carey. Because a kid has been a fool is no sign that he is going to keep it up. I'm game. I'm going to be a man, and I'm going to have business sense. I'm going to 'get there' and I'm not scared. To-morrow morning at ten o'clock I'm coming to the bank and I want to know the whole story."

Major Carey shook his head.

"I'm afraid it's too late."

"Too late to know what struck you?" laughed



Morey. "Perhaps I've got more brains than you think."

"At ten o'clock in the morning, then," sighed Major Carey.

"That's the first business engagement I ever had," replied Morey, "and I rather like it. I'll be there."



## CHAPTER VII

### AN EXCITING INTERVIEW.

Old Marsh Green was perhaps the poorest farmer in Rappahannock County. But when it came to facts in relation to the Marshall family or the land it had owned, his information was profuse and exact. When Morey knocked on his cabin door at six o'clock the next morning and ordered the white-haired darkey to turn out and saddle Betty and Jim, Marsh and Amos were more than amazed. They were confounded. No Marshall had ever risen at such an hour within the colored man's recollection.

"Somepin gwine come frum dis," muttered Marsh. "Tain't natchal."

Amos was greatly relieved to find that the early morning business did not relate to the knife he had purloined.

Marsh knew no more after Morey had accomplished his purpose. In an hour and a half the boy and the "overseer" had ridden from one end of the plantation to the other and across it; not only the present one hundred and sixty-acre



piece immediately about the "mansion," but east and west, north and south, over all the acres once attached to the place. On a bit of paper Morey made a rough chart of the land as his father had known and cultivated it and on each, parcel and division he set down notes concerning the quality of the soil, when last cultivated by the Marshalls, and its present physical condition.

At nine o'clock he breakfasted with his mother and at ten o'clock he was at the Barber Bank in Lee's Court House, above which Major Carey had an office.

"I believe, Morey," began Major Carey, "after giving this problem a great deal of thought, that the best thing to do, possibly, would be to let my son-in-law, Mr. Bradner, take charge of the matter."

"A stranger," exclaimed Morey.

"Well, you see," explained Major Carey, "he knows the situation and he can talk to your mother. I confess that I can't, and you are rather young to undertake it. It's a business proposition now and he's a business man."

"We won't talk to my mother at all. At least not yet. And, when we do, I'll do it. There's no



call to ring in an outsider. I'm ready for business. Now what does this all mean?"

Major Carey sighed and pointed to a chair on one side of a dusty, paper-littered table.

"It means," began the planter money-lender, "that your mother owes \$14,092 with an additional \$800 soon due."

Morey, instead of sitting down, sprang to his feet.

"Why—why, we have never had all that money."

"That's it. It began when your father was alive. Eleven thousand of it he had. The rest of it is interest and—"

"But my mother has money of her own. She had a fortune that is her's."

"So she believes," explained Major Carey, "but, Morey, money is an unknown quantity to your dear mother. She had and still has \$5,000. It is safely invested and brings a revenue of \$300 a year. On that and with what little your place has produced in the last three years you have lived."

"My schooling cost more than that."

"There you have it. Captain Barber advanced the money for your school bills."

Morey's face whitened and his lip quivered.



Then he leaned across the table, his hand shaking, and exclaimed:

“And that’s what you call looking out for our interests! How could you let me make such a fool of myself? Do you imagine I hadn’t the manhood to do the right thing?”

“I’d have told you, but, my boy, your mother is different. She couldn’t stand it.”

“Yet you are willing now, when we are in over our heads and about ready to drown, to let a stranger tell her.”

“What can we do?”

“You can treat me like a man. Go on,” said Morey stoutly. “Tell me what has happened. If we are ‘all in’ I want to know just how deep the water is. Don’t you be afraid. You’re not talking to Mother now.”

Major Carey seemed almost to be saying to himself, “I wish I were.” His restlessness increased.

“There are three mortgages on Aspley Place,” he began, drawing a green box from his old-fashioned desk. “The first one was made to the Richmond Trust Co. and is on the big one hundred and eighty-acre piece now in corn. This is for \$4,500. On the two sixty-acre pieces to the north, the meadow and the tobacco



ground, there is a mortgage of \$,3000 for money advanced by Captain Barber. Just before your father died I loaned him \$3,750 on the one hundred and sixty-acre home piece and the forty acres of low land on the east next the creek."

Morey's lips were tightly set. Each new item came like a stab; but he had his pencil out.

"That's \$11,250," he commented.

"These notes all draw seven per cent," explained the planter, rising and laying off his coat, for the morning was warm and he was perspiring. "That is \$787.50 a year interest. Your mother has not been in a position to meet these payments. I have advanced this amount annually for three years."

"I must certainly thank you for that—"

"And took her notes, which, of course, are morally protected by the mortgage I hold on the home, and—"

"That's \$2,262.50 more," added Morey with a start.

"Then," added Major Carey, "your mother's account at the bank is overdrawn \$580, four hundred of it for your Richmond bills."

The boy set down the items, added them, saw that they corresponded to the other's total and



turned, without speaking, to gaze out of the window into the street below.

“And I reckon you all want your money,” he said in a low voice at last.

“We are not pushing matters,” explained Major Carey, “but we have all agreed that you ought to know the real facts.”

“And this Richmond Trust Co. note,” broke in Morey suddenly. “I suppose the note is due. Perhaps they won’t renew it. I don’t know much about these things, but they could push us, couldn’t they? They might foreclose on the land and take it, mightn’t they?”

Major Carey coughed. “That note has passed into the hands of other parties.”

“Whose? Do you know?”

“Captain Barber’s bank.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Morey, “our bank? Yours and Captain Barber’s?”

“Yes. But, of course, it is one of the bank’s assets now and the directors are anxious to get their money.”

“Why? Isn’t the interest enough? The security is certainly ample.”

“That’s the trouble, Morey. The security is not the best. Farm lands hereabouts have



fallen so in value that we are calling in all loans of that sort."

"That ground is worth \$100 an acre, any way," exclaimed Morey, glancing at the chart he had made and the estimate he had secured from Marsh Green.

"Perhaps \$25, but I doubt if that could be realized at a forced sale."

Morey's face fell.

"Isn't any of it worth more than that?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Then the whole plantation isn't worth more than \$15,000."

The Major nodded his head.

"I reckon we are up against it," exclaimed Morey with a grim smile. "And I had figured it out to be worth \$60,000 any way."

"Some of the old place isn't worth \$10 an acre," replied the planter. "The house you can not count as worth anything."

"Except to us," broke in Morey stoutly. "To us it's worth just enough to make us want to keep it."

"There will be another \$800 due as interest this fall," the elder man explained with a long face and puckered lips, "and I don't see how I can advance any more money to care for it."



Morey, who had been desperately trying to see some ray of light in the chaos of financial gloom, had a sudden idea.

“This land is really ours, still, isn’t it? That is, so long as the mortgages are not foreclosed?”

“Certainly,” answered Major Carey, a little nervously.

“How comes it then that Captain Barber carted away our tobacco shed?”

“Did he do that?” began Major Carey. “Yes, I believe he did. Well, it was in ruins. I think he got your mother’s consent. Then there were the taxes,” he continued, as if the thought had just come to him. “He had advanced the money for taxes on the tobacco land.”

“And the one hundred and eighty-acre corn piece?” persisted Morey. “Marsh Green says he was ordered off it—that Captain Barber said it belonged to the bank.”

“No,” explained the Major, “not exactly that. But old Green couldn’t farm it. He tried it the year after your father died and the weeds took his crop.”

“Who did farm it?” asked the boy, the Marshall jaw setting itself in spite of his despair.



"We tried to look after it for your mother—the bank."

"And the bank had two years' corn crop on it?"

"Yes, that is, it rented it out. But crops were poor both years. And the ground is run down. There wasn't much in it. We had to buy fertilizer and pay taxes and—"

"Was there anything in it?"

Morey looked across the table at his father's old friend.

"Maybe—a little."

"You have everything figured out in cents that we owe you. Shouldn't there have been another column to show what you and the bank owes us?"

"Do I understand, sir," exclaimed Major Carey indignantly, "that you are making charges? You don't reckon we have taken advantage of your mother? Young man, if it hadn't been for our bank you'd be working at day labor—"

"And I expect to," came the quick answer. "That's neither here nor there. You needn't send Mr. Bradner to talk to my mother—you needn't say anything yourself. I'll attend to this. I never earned a dollar in my life but I



can add and subtract. You've been mighty good to us, Major Carey, and I'm not going to pay you with thanks. How long will you give me to take up the obligations?"

"How long? What d'you mean?" exclaimed Major Carey.

"You don't reckon I'm going to let the Barber Bank scoop up six hundred acres of good Virginia dirt for \$14,000 do you?" said Morey significantly. "I don't think my father's old friend would be willing to see us permit that."

Major Carey sprang to his feet.

"All we want is our money," exclaimed the planter in a thick voice. "We're entitled to that, you know."

"Certainly. But wouldn't you rather have the land?"

"That's what I was going to suggest," blurted out the Major, the banker and money-lender in him coming to the top.

Morey smiled.

"I thought so," he remarked tartly.

"What do you mean?" shouted the Major, his face almost purple with sudden rage.

"I mean," answered Morey coldly, "that for \$14,000 you and Captain Barber and Mr. Brad-



ner—and I reckon that's the Barber Bank—are planning to get our plantation."

Major Carey exploded:

"Young man, you have some high and mighty ideas. Aspley plantation is dear at \$20 an acre. This is the return for all my generosity."

"You're getting seven per cent annually for your generosity," retorted the boy.

"Are you prepared to pay this debt?" came from Major Carey savagely.

"I'll be prepared in time," rejoined Morey with assurance. "Our farm isn't worth \$20 an acre for tobacco. Perhaps it isn't worth any more for corn. But, you know, land can be used for other things. It's worth \$200 an acre for fruit. I'll sell enough of it to pay you all and I'll be ready to make good when the money's due."

Major Carey sank into a chair.

"And if you or Captain Barber or Mr. Bradner have any occasion to see my mother on business in the meantime I suggest they make a report on the two years' use of our one hundred and eighty-acre corn piece. And, by the way," added Morey, "if my mother needs some small amounts of money this summer I wish you would instruct Mr. Bradner to let her have what



she needs. You can charge it to our open current account."

The perspiration was rolling from the excited planter's face. Leaning forward he grasped Morey by the arm.

"You're a fool," he said huskily.

"So you told me last night—that I resembled my mother."

"You don't know what you are talking about. Who told you to say this?"

"The foolishness I inherited from my mother. Good-bye!"



## CHAPTER VIII

### A CONSULTATION WITH AN ATTORNEY.

It was one thing for Morey to announce that he meant to take care of his mother's debts. It was another thing to decide just how this promise was to be carried out. But, although Morey had climbed the dusty, narrow stairs to Major Carey's office with nervous dread, he came down with something of assurance—as far as one could make out from the expression on the boy's countenance. His face was red, he was perspiring, his hat was well back on his mussed-up hair and he still held, absent-mindedly, the scrap of paper on which he had been figuring.

Within the entryway at the bottom of the stairs he paused, scratched his head, took out and counted all the money he had in the world—seventy-five cents. Then he laughed.

“I only need \$14,091.75 more,” he said.

“For some moments he gazed out into the almost silent street. On a sudden impulse he pulled his hat down, started forward, and,



reaching the sidewalk, gazed to the right and left. Midway in the next block and over the postoffice he saw a sign, in washed-out blue and pale gold: "E. L. Lomax, Attorney and Counselor At Law. Fire Insurance and Money Loaned."

He started toward it but, passing the drug store on the corner, he entered, purchased a sheet of paper, an envelope and a stamp and on a greasy soda water counter wrote this note:

Lee's Court House, Virginia.

Mr. Glenn Curtiss,

Hammondsport, N. Y.

Dear Sir.—My order of recent date concerning the purchase of a six-cylinder aeroplane engine is hereby countermanded. Circumstances have arisen that force me to ask you to stop shipment; to wit, I have no money to pay for the engine.

Your obedient servant,

MORTIMER MARSHALL.

Sealing and stamping the note, Morey ordered and drank a five-cent ice cream soda as if to fortify himself, and then, dropping his letter in the postoffice, he mounted the creaking stairs to the office of E. L. Lomax. The door was open, but the place was deserted. A few



law books, a typewriter, white with dust, a box of sawdust used as a spittoon, a stove crammed full of paper scraps as if already prepared for the next winter, a disarranged desk and four walls almost completely covered with insurance advertisements, and several brown and cracked maps of Rappahannock County, confronted him.

Morey turned to leave. On the door he saw a scrap of paper which seemed to have been there many days. "Gone out. Back soon," it read. He turned, sat down and waited. An hour went by and the lawyer did not appear. Morey determined to make some inquiries. As he reached the bottom of the stairs a middle-aged man in a wide black hat and a long coat, who was sitting in the window of the postoffice, rose and greeted him.

"Did you want to see me?" the man asked.

"Are you Mr. Lomax?"

The man, who had a large quid of tobacco in his mouth, of which there were traces on his shirt front, carefully expectorated through a grating on the flag stone sidewalk and waved his hand toward the stairs, on which there were more signs of tobacco.

"Well, so long, Judge," drawled a man who had been sitting in the same open window.



“Are you Judge Lomax?” began Morey when the two had reached the musty office above. In the vague roster of the town celebrities the name was familiar to him.

“How can I serve you?” answered the man, kicking the sawdust-filled cuspidor into the middle of the floor. “I am Judge Lomax, but I have retired from the bench.”

“My name is Marshall, Mortimer Marshall.”

“Colonel Aspley Marshall’s son?”

“Yes sir.”

“Proud to meet you, my boy. Yo’ fathah was one of my best friends. How can I serve you?”

“Do you deal in lands? Do you buy and sell property?” asked Morey directly.

“I am an attorney,” answered Judge Lomax, “but my legal business throws me more or less into such business.”

“Have you any knowledge of our place? That is, do you know anything about the value of Aspley plantation?”

“I know every foot of it. It is a fine bit of land.”

“What is it worth?”

Judge Lomax expectorated, rose and consulted one of the many land charts hanging on



the wall, and then opened a worn volume on the table showing the farms of the county by section lines.

“Well, as to that,” he answered evasively, “it is hard to say—off hand. Are you desiring to sell the property?”

“I want to borrow some money on it and, later perhaps, if the price is right, we may sell it.”

Judge Lomax looked out of the window.

“I understand,” he said, after a pause, “that the entire place is mortgaged.”

“For \$14,000,” answered Morey. “The Barber Bank holds the notes. They are due this fall. I want to pay them and save the place. I can’t let the land go for \$14,000.”

“That’s a good deal of money,” commented the lawyer.

“But it’s nowhere near the value of the land. That’s only a little over \$20 an acre for it. The land is certainly worth more than that.”

“I reckon, if you can find a buyer. But it’s pretty hard to dispose of a parcel of ground of that size.”

“How much is it worth, in your judgment, at a forced sale.”

“I, ah, well, I could hardly say, off hand.”



“How much will you lend me on it.”

The lawyer shook his head.

“Money is pretty close just now. And my clients are a little slow about lending on these old tobacco plantations. We know they are good land, but they don’t rank well as security.”

“Couldn’t you lend me \$15,000 at least?” asked Morey nervously.

“I’ll look about for you and consult some of my moneyed clients.”

“When can you give me an answer?”

Judge Lomax knit his brows in thought and took a fresh chew of tobacco.

“Just you wait here a minute,” he said at last. “I’ll run out and see a party. Perhaps I can help you out.”

The lawyer hastened from his office. Ten minutes went by and he had not returned. The room was hot. Morey, in an effort to get a little fresh air moved to one of the windows. He sat down in it and looked out. At the same moment he caught sight of Judge Lomax on the steps of Barber’s Bank, in the next block. By the side of the lawyer stood the tall, heavy figure of Major Carey. Morey sprang up, looked again and then watched the two men in earnest talk for several minutes.



When the attorney came slowly into the room after another five minutes Morey knew what the verdict would be. Instinctively he had come to a quick conclusion. Judge Lomax had put him off until he could consult the enemy.

"I'm afraid," began the lawyer, "that it's going to be difficult to do what you want. Money is pretty tight now."

"Then you can't do it?" said Morey with composure.

"Not just now—later, perhaps."

"You wouldn't mind telling me what Major Carey instructed you to say the land was worth?" continued the boy, successfully suppressing his indignation.

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. You've done me a low down trick. I saw you rush right over to Barber and Carey for orders. Do you get a commission from them for not dealing with me?"

"I'll kick you downstairs."

"Try it."

The boy stood ready, his clear eyes fixed on the embarrassed loan agent.

"You're not a lawyer," sneered Morey, "you're a shyster."



Judge Lomax started forward, but Morey squared himself.

“Oh, I’m not afraid of you—tattle tale!” exclaimed the boy, knowing no more expressive epithet. “Come on!”

“If you were n’t a child—”

“Got your orders, did you?” taunted Morey. “You’re a fine bunch here in this town. I’ll see you all, later. And I’ll make you all feel so small you can jump through a finger ring. And mark me,” added the boy, “if *you* ever get yourself mixed up with this Aspley place deal I’ll come for you first.”

He turned and was about to leave the room when something prompted him to look around. The lawyer, white of face and trembling like a leaf, had lunged forward and an iron paper weight whizzed past the boy’s head striking and shattering the white frosted glass in the door. Morey dodged, stumbled, recovered himself and then, his own anger getting the better of him, he, too, sprang forward. The crazed lawyer was reaching for some object on his disordered desk. Morey could not see what it was—it might be a deadly weapon. He himself was unarmed.

Alarmed and frenzied the boy threw himself



forward, leaped on the lawyer's back, clasped him in his strong young arms just as he caught sight of a revolver and then hurled the struggling man with all his might to the floor. There was a crash as Judge Lomax's head struck the wooden cuspidor. The revolver rolled under the table and Morey ran from the office.

It was now noon. Lee's Court House streets were deserted. Hastening to the front of Barber's Bank, where he had left Betty, Morey was about to mount when, to his surprise, Captain Barber and Major Carey suddenly appeared in the door of the bank. Morey was fighting mad.

"I've just left your friend, Judge Lomax," exclaimed the boy impudently. "He's on the floor of his office with a busted head. He delivered your message all right."

"Morey," said Major Carey sharply and sternly. "You've lost your senses. You're going too far. You're making the mistake of your life."

"Somebody's making a mistake—Judge Lomax did. You gentlemen have been running this town so long that you think you own it. I reckon the people here think you do. *I don't.*"

Major Carey came forward across the walk





MOREY RAN FROM THE OFFICE.







with all the dignity that was commensurate with his indignation.

“Come into the bank. We want to talk to you,” he ordered with the authoritative tone of a parent.

“Are you ready to make a settlement for the rent of the corn land?”

A couple of bystanders were within earshot and the two bankers looked at each other in alarm.

“When I enter your office again, Major Carey, I’ll be ready to settle with you. I hope you’ll be ready to settle with me.”

And jumping on fat Betty’s back Morey loped down the dusty street toward Aspley place two miles away.

At home he found a note from Lieutenant Purcell with the returned fishing rod. The note said:

“My dear young friend:

I had hoped to bring the rod in person and to have the pleasure of meeting you and your mother. I cannot thank you too much for the kind invitation you gave me and am most grateful for the use of your rod. I am forced today to proceed at once to Washington in the line of my present duty and for some weeks shall be



stationed at Fort Meyer. Possibly, on my return, after a month or so, we may meet again.

FRED PURCELL."

Morey passed a good part of the afternoon in his room. He thought, figured, walked the floor and at times went out into the yard and looked critically at things that, heretofore, he he had never seen. At the evening meal his mother commented on his quietness. She attributed it to disappointment over the loss of his aeroplane motor.

"After all, Mortimer," she said indulgently, "I've been wondering today if we were not just a little hard with you. Perhaps it might be arranged."

The boy smiled, patted his mother's shapely hand and said:

"Don't bother about that, mater. I've put it out of my mind. Major Carey's arguments were absolutely convincing." And he smiled again.

"We never can repay Major Carey for all he has done for us," said Mrs. Marshall, sipping her tea.

"Well, any way, I'm going to try," answered Morey.



But this meant nothing to Mrs. Marshall, who was buttering a biscuit.

“You had quite a long talk with our old friend. What was the nicest thing he said to you?”

“He said I inherited some of your qualities,” answered Morey with another smile.

“The kind old flatterer,” murmured Morey’s mother.

Nor could she then understand why Morey laughed so heartily. As the two left the table, on an inspiration, the boy took his mother in his arms and kissed her. It was the last kiss he gave her for some weeks.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE SECRET OF AN OLD DESK.

Full as the day had been for Morey the coming of night did not put a stop to the working of his brain. Thinking seriously for the first time in his life, he had enough to engage him. Concerning his encounter with Judge Lomax he said nothing. In comparison with the difficult problem of saving his mother's property this encounter was a small matter. And yet it was this that decided his first step in the struggle that was before him.

The boy was hungry for advice, the counsel of some good friend. His first thought was of Lieutenant Purcell. The soldier was a stranger, but Morey had already cut himself off from the people at Lee's Court House whom, twenty-four hours before, he would have counted as his best friends.

"There isn't one of them, young or old," said the lad to himself, "who would give me a square deal if it cost them a cent." And by "them" he meant Carey, Barber and Bradner of the bank.



Since Lieutenant Purcell had already left for Washington this avenue of help was closed. Morey's mother, of course, could be of no more assistance than a child. Never before had Morey felt so lonesome. For the first time he realized that he was fatherless and alone. When night fell a breeze came down from the mountains and it became too cool to stay outdoors. Mrs. Marshall, who had been sitting on the decaying gallery, retired to the musty old parlor and after Mammy Ca'line had lighted the crystal-hung table lamp, she made herself comfortable with an ancient copy of Dickens. Morey, standing by her side, gazed upon the shadowy painting of his father.

Suddenly, out of the new longing in him, came an inspiration; he bethought him of his father's old room and desk and papers. Perhaps there might be something there, some scrap to help him in his dilemma. He had no idea what there might be among his father's things. But at least, since he had never even looked inside the desk, he wished to do so. He did not speak of what was in his mind, for the room and its contents were held almost sacred by his mother.

Slipping quietly from his mother's side, he had not reached the door when she recalled him.



"Mortimer," she said in her tone of fine breeding, "I have been worrying about you all evening. We have not been considerate enough. I have been thinking of your dear father."

"Yes, mother, so have I."

"Major Carey says you take after me in some respects."

Morey smiled.

"It is your father you resemble. This wild fancy of yours is natural. If your father had had his way—"

Then she paused and sighed.

"What, mother? I never knew—"

"You never knew that he spent two years abroad as a young man—that he studied in Germany—chemistry I think."

Morey caught his mother's arm.

"Some foolish idea. But he abandoned it. His father wished otherwise and he was as dutiful as you are going to be."

"What was it?" exclaimed Morey. "What was his idea? What were his hopes?"

His mother sighed again.

"I never understood," she added. "It was all behind him when I knew him first. But it was something about paint made out of rocks or dirt—I can't remember now."



"And they wouldn't let him work out his ambitions?" exclaimed Morey.

His mother smiled.

"He became a planter, a gentleman and my husband."

"Well," said Morey, a little bitterly, "don't think of me any more this evening if it makes you think of father."

"And he had other notions," continued Mrs. Marshall in a reminiscent tone, "why, before we were married, he had a workshop somewhere here on the plantation."

"What was he working on?" asked Morey abruptly.

The mother shook her head.

"I never knew," she answered lightly, "but I do know, now, that his boy ought not be blamed for having the same fancies. I know you'll get over them," she said, patting his hand, "and that's why I've relented. It may be extravagant but, Morey, I'm not going to countermand your purchase. You may have your engine."

His mother straightened up in her chair ready for Morey's burst of gratitude. But it did not come.

"It's awfully good of you," said Morey slowly and with the tears almost in his eyes,



“but I’m reconciled. I think Major Carey knows best. We can’t get it just now.”

“Morey, I’m proud of you. There you are really like your father. He quit his foolish experiments to please me.” And drawing the lad to her she patted his cheek.

Morey’s head filled with a dozen ideas—among them, the wild desire to examine his father’s desk drew him like a magnet. When his mother had returned to her book again the boy slipped into the hall. A single candle flickered in the gloom. With this in his nervous fingers he made his way to the hall above. He knew that his father’s old office and study—the room in front across from his mother’s bed room was locked but he knew, too, where her keys hung. From the hook at the head of her bed he took these and, a moment later, he was in the long-locked apartment.

He had been in it before but never alone. The air was heavy and hot. Between the two front windows stood the flat-topped table with its three drawers on each side. In the room were many other things—discarded clothing, two trunks, a case of books, a box of plantation account books—all these Morey had seen and wondered at on the few occasions when he had been per-



mitted to remove, from time to time, his father's saddle, gun, rod and—only the fall before, as a great prize—the old riding crop.

But these things did not interest him now. Falling on his knees he drew open the drawers, tight with disuse. Each was full; insurance policies, bills of sale, weight tickets, auction lists, letters, small account books. In one a case of pistols; in another, European guide books and old steamship circulars. His hands covered with dust and his clothes white with it he paused after a quick examination. Then, with boyish impulse he turned again to the drawer containing the pistol case. As he drew the case from its dusty bed he saw, beneath it, a flat packet of blue paper tied with red tape.

Holding the mahogany pistol box under one arm with his free hand he lowered the dripping candle to the drawers. On the packet, about eight inches long by four inches wide and an inch deep, he read with difficulty, for the inscription was in faded brown ink: "To whom it may concern. A dream of the future. Aspley Marshall, February 5th, 1889."

Grasping the package, he let the pistol case sink back into the drawer and, his heart beating wildly, hurried from the room. Locking the



door and replacing the keys, he ran to his own little bedroom at the far end of the dark and wide upper hallway. Lighting his own candle he hesitated a moment and then slipped the rotten tape from the parcel.

Opened, the packet turned out to be twelve sheets of heavy blue letter paper. The two bottom ones were covered with the outlines of a mechanical device resembling the cylinder of an engine. These were in black with figures on them in red, and seemed to be front and side elevations of some power apparatus. Next to them were two sheets of formulæ in red figures with chemical equations. Morey made no attempt to understand them. Like the projections on the last pages they were beyond his comprehension. Between these four sheets and a single sheet containing a few lines in brown ink on top, lay seven closely written pages beginning, "Stuttgart, 1888—Last will and testament of a man with a dream."

The inscription on the top sheet, evidently written later, was brief:

"To whomsoever may take the trouble to open and read this record:

"To those who are striving to harness and apply the forces of nature to man's uses, these



experiments are dedicated and bequeathed. In the knowledge that hydrogen gas in its free and pure state is the most powerful force known, I herein propound, theoretically, the practicability of using it as a motive power. The inefficiency of coal, as transformed into steam, and the known high efficiency of hydrogen as an explosive force being recognized, placing it first in the list of potentialities, I suggest the introduction of hydrogen gas into engine cylinders. The following pages discuss:

“1. The liquefaction of pure hydrogen to render it practically portable.

“2. Its admixture with air behind a piston to secure a maximum of expansive force.

“In brief, a plan for indefinitely increasing the power of gas engines by mixing unstable hydrogen with air.”

Morey laid the sheets on the table as if they weighed pounds. He drew a long breath and whistled.

“Well, what do you think of that,” he exclaimed to himself.

He had no idea what it meant. But that was not his first surprise. His astonishment was over the fact that such a record had been made by his father. That was more than he could



reason out. Then he read the top sheet again.

“The practicability of using hydrogen gas as a motive power!”

Suddenly a bit of information Morey had learned at Hammondsport came back to him—“hydrogen is sixteen times as powerful as dynamite.”

He began thinking. “When my father wrote that we had no automobiles and no automobile motors. We had not even dreamed of the aeroplane and the delicate, powerful engine it demands. His idea must have been a dream. If he had a practical plan for increasing the efficiency of the motor he thought ahead of his day.”

Morey tried to examine further into the technical manuscript. But it was wholly beyond him. In the midst of his examination he sprang to his feet.

“The trouble with aeroplanes,” he said to himself, “is that the power developed is not sufficient. My father’s dream may solve the problem. His hydrogen may make engines powerful enough to make the perfect airship.”

The perplexities of the day seemed to disappear. Rays of hope burst through the gloom of the boy’s despondency. Mingled with the



wave of sorrow that swept over him when he thought of his little understood, and no doubt disappointed father, was a sudden glow of enthusiasm. He would finish his father's work. He would carry forward the dream into a practical idea for the sake of his mother.

It was nine o'clock. Tingling with excitement Morey hastily concealed the precious manuscript and drawings in his trunk and sought his mother. In the lower hall he heard a familiar low whistle. It was Amos crouching in the dark at the foot of the stairs. The black boy put his hand on Morey's arm and motioned him silently to come out to the rear of the house. He shook his head ominously.

"Wha' fo' yo' don' tell me yo' beat up Jedge Lummix?"

"I didn't beat him up," laughed Morey.

"Dey say yo' nigh kilt 'im. De town's all 'citement."

"Is he hurt?" asked Morey, a little alarmed. Then he told the colored boy what had happened. At the end Amos shook his head.

"I been to town fo' a pail o' lard. Marshall Robi'son gwine come fo' yo' in de mornin'. Yo' gwine be 'rested an' locked up. Da's what."

"Who told you?" asked Morey now thor-



oughly alarmed. "I only acted in self defense. They can't do anything to me."

"Mr. Robi'son done ast me was I Miss Marshall's boy. An' he said I kin tell yo' he gwine come an' git yo' tomorrer."

"Why didn't he come today?"

Amos shook his head.

"Ain't tol' me dat. But yo' better make has'e and see Major Carey."

"Is that what he told you to say?" asked Morey indignantly, clinching his fists.

"Da's what he says prezacly."

Morey walked down the path in a feverish quandary, Amos following him like a dog. Why had he not been arrested at once if a warrant was out? Why should he be told to go and see Major Carey? The possibilities alarmed him. What if he was arrested and fined? He had no money to pay a fine. Would he be locked up in jail? Would the whole thing be used as a club over him? And just when he had the big, new project in mind—a resolution to put his father's dream to the test?

Suddenly a wild thought came to him. His face flushed and then his jaw set. He did not mean to be arrested and submit to the disgrace of it; he was determined to see and consult with



those who would properly estimate the value of his mother's farm and sell it if possible; he meant to find those who could understand the meaning of his father's secret. He had resolved to leave Aspley Place at once. But where should he go? There was only one answer. He had but one friend old enough to advise him—Lieutenant Fred Purcell. But Lieutenant Purcell was in Washington.

At eight o'clock the next morning, when Mammy Ca'line took Mrs. Marshall's black coffee to her room she found, beneath the door, a note. She handed it to her mistress, who read:

“Dear Mother: I have gone away for a short time—a few weeks, I reckon. It's on business. Amos is with me. I took him because I know you'll feel better about my going. Don't worry. I can't tell you where I am. In a short time I'll write. You'll hear that I licked Judge Lomax. I didn't. He insulted me and I protected myself. If Major Carey or Captain Barber asks you where I am, tell him it's none of their business. I'm sorry I could n't tell you good-bye, but I was afraid you wouldn't stand for what I'm doing, and I had to go.

Your loving son,  
MOBEY.”



## CHAPTER X

### AMOS BECOMES A SANCHE PANZA.

"Amos, we're going traveling," exclaimed Morey.

"Yo' gwine run away?"

"I'm going to run away and you are going with me."

"No, sah. I ain't done no hahm. I ain't skeered."

"I'm not scared, exactly, but I'm going away. I am going to seek my fortune." The boy smiled as he said it. Could he have seen the black boy's face he would have been puzzled indeed.

"Wha' dat yo' sayin', Marse Morey?"

"I'm going to leave this place; goin' away to do something—to help myself."

"Yo' is skeered—da's what."

"Well, let it go at that. Tonight I'm goin' to duck—vamoose. I won't be back here for a good many days—perhaps."

"Da's foolish talk, Marse Morey. How come it yo' gwine away when yo' all jes' got home to yo' ma?"



"You might understand and you might not, Amos. It is a new story but it is a long one already. All you have to know is this—did you ever hear of any one working for a living?"

"Not no white person, 'less'n he wanted to."

"I want to. I'm in trouble. It'll be worse if I stay around here. So we're going to Washington."

"Yo' and yo' ma?"

"You and me!"

"Me?"

"We are going to slip away tonight. If I had money I wouldn't take you. I'd go on the train. But I haven't any money. So I'm going to drive there in the surrey with Betty."

"Me gwine to Whas'ton?"

"Tonight. And we start as soon as we can get ready."

The black boy had edged away in a state of half terror.

"No, sah, chile. No, sah, Marse Morey. My pa won't let me."

"Your father won't know anything about it. And my mother won't. That's the reason we are going. If you speak of it to your father I'll thrash you. Do you hear?"



"I cain't go to no Wash'ton now. I'se gwine camp meetin' Sunday."

"You'll probably be camping by the roadside next Sunday," laughed Morey.

"No, sah, Marse Morey, I can't do dat. I been to Linden once when de circus show was dere and pa done lambast me fo' dat. How fur dat Wash'ton?"

"About seventy-five miles."

"An' yo' reckon we gwine git dar wid ole Betty?"

"Or walk."

"Escuse me. Escuse me. How yo' mean 'bout dat 'fortune and wukkin'?"

"I mean, Amos, that things aren't going right around here. We may have to move away from Aspley Place."

"Yo' done makin' spoht—"

"I can't tell you about it, but I've got to go away to arrange things so that my mother and your father and Mammy Ca'line and you and I can stay here. If you don't come along and help me and look after Betty we'll have to find another home."

Amos was open-mouthed.

"We all ain't got no other home, Marse Mo-



rey. We's bound to stay here. Who gwine make us go 'way?"

"Never mind, now. But if you won't go I'll have to go alone. I thought you'd stick by me."

"Who gwine do chores fo' Mammy?"

"Who's going to look after me?" answered Morey.

The black boy was in a quandary.

"I reckon yo' ma gwine blame me fo' dis."

"Amos, did you ever hear of Don Quixote?"

"Dat a seegar?"

"Don Quixote was a man. He lived a long time ago—before even the Marshalls began to raise tobacco. He was poor as, as, well as we are. But, like a young man I know, this didn't seem to make much difference to him. He sat, day after day, reading books about impossible things for this was in the time of chivalry—"

"Yas, sah—I knows dat—chivaree. Da's when yo' get married."

Morey laughed, stopped his story and laying his hand on Amos' arm led him into the dark, silent house, up the stairs to his room and, closing the door, lit his candle.

"Like to hear more about Don Quixote?" he asked, sitting down on his trunk.

"I ain't hear 'bout him."



“Well, he was a fine fellow, only he was crazy. He got so twisted in his head that he couldn’t see anything straight. He thought his home and the things about him were all right. But the place was tumbling over his head and he didn’t know it. When his servant stole chickens for him—”

“Who stole chickens? I ain’t steal no chickens. We done borrow ouah chickens.”

Morey held up a warning finger, with a smile.

“He couldn’t even see that the barn was rotten and no use; that there were weeds all over his place; that the house was too old to stand up.”

Amos sighed and knit his brows in an effort to connect the old knight with something he could grasp mentally.

“And that wasn’t the worst,” went on Morey, “when Don Quixote go so bad that he began to ‘see things’; when he was ‘conjured’ out of his wits, he up, one day, and decided to leave his home and seek his fortune in other places.”

“He done gwine to Wash’ton?”

“About the same thing,” explained Morey. “He took his old horse and rode away looking for—well everything he didn’t have at home.”

“Dey gwine to take his farm away?”



"No," went on Morey, "he just went because he had a foolish idea that the impossible things he had read about might come true."

Amos sighed again.

"Dey comin' fo' yo' in de mawnin' " he interrupted.

"That isn't all about Don Quixote. He went away and everything turned out wrong. If it hadn't been for one thing the old man would have starved. He had all kinds of trouble. How do you reckon he got home again, all safe and sound?"

"How dat?" queried the black boy, straining his wits to understand.

"I say, the old Knight of La Mancha, in other words, Don Quixote, filled with the delusion that the world was really a land of chivalry, which in truth had even then passed away, set forth upon his knightly steed to do deeds of valor in honor of fair ladies and to show his courage. Instead he found only derision, cuffs, kicks and a foodless reception. How then, do you imagine he was able to return home again?"

"Mus' 'a been dat chivaree."

"Listen, Amos, this crazy old man got back home because the only person in all the world



who really cared for him went with him and looked after him."

"He done have a colored man?"

"Almost. He had old Sancho Panza. Sancho was his boy, and he never left him."

Amos was in sore straits. Morey said no more for a few moments, but he began making preparations for his departure. He laid out a few clothes and took down the old, battered traveling bag that he had unpacked but the day before; the black boy's eyes filled with tears.

"Marse Morey," whimpered Amos, "yo' ain't foolin' me? Yo' sho' gwine away to Wash'ton?"

"As soon as I can pack my grip, write a note to my mother, get together all Mammy Ca'line's loose food and hitch up."

"An' yo' ain't goin' to tell yo' ma?"

Morey shook his head.

"But she ain't gwine skin yo' like my pa trounce me!"

"I'll see that you aren't punished."

Big tears rolled down Amos' sunken cheeks. Then his big black hands wandered over his patched and tattered garments. As Morey laid some fresh linen in his valise the colored boy looked shamefacedly at his own faded blue



calico shirt. Then he dug his shoeless toes into the carpet.

Finally, with a gulp, he exclaimed:

“Marse Morey, I jes’ natchally cain’t.”

“Then I’ve got to go alone and take my chances,” answered Morey, opening his trunk and taking out the blue packet, his father’s “dream,” that was to mean so much to him.

“I ain’t got no clo’es,” almost sobbed the black boy.

“What’s the matter with your meetin’ pants and the shoes you had on last night?”

“Dem’s my *Sunday* cloes!”

“All right. Goodbye.”

“Sides, pa’s in de cabin.”

Morey turned, smiled and put his arm on Amos’ shoulder.

“Of course you’re going. We’ve lived together all our lives. You go and tell your father I want to see him right away, out on the kitchen gallery. While he is gone pack up your duds. I’ll tell him to hitch up, that we have to go to town. Hide your things in the surrey while he is gone.”

There was no delay in carrying out this plan. By the time Marsh Green had responded to Morey’s summons, hooked up old Betty to the surrey and brought the ancient equipage to the



barnyard gate, Morey was ready. His letter to his mother had been written and in the weeds and grass, well down toward the front yard gate was a little pile of baggage, a bulging traveling bag, a package of books and circulars, two blankets and a basket of such food as he could find—two loaves of bread, a dozen cold biscuits, a small paper of sugar, a few pinches of tea, a quart cup, two glasses of jelly, a tin can of some preserves and a half pound of salt pork. Amos' baggage was not even tied in a bundle.

"Marse Morey," said old Marsh, as Morey and Amos climbed into the creaking vehicle, "yo doin' right. Go right to Major Carey. He git yo' outen yo' trouble. But don't yo' go traipsin' 'roun' dat Captain Barber. He ain' no better dan Jedge Lummix. Go right to Major Carey—he's yo' frien.' "

"Still," laughed Morey, "we might meet Marshal Robinson and he might put me in jail. So goodbye until I see you again." He held out his hand.

"Go 'long, boy. Ain't no Marshal Rob'ison gwine git yo'," and the old darkey chuckled. "Amos," he added with mock sternness, "don't yo' come back 'yar widdout Marse Morey."

"No, sah, I won't," responded the perturbed Amos.



“Anyway, goodbye, Marsh, ’till we see you again. We may not come back right away. Goodbye.”

The old “overseer” turned away with another chuckle.

“Major Carey ’ll git yo’ ouden yo’ mess. I’ll leab de gate open. Take care ob dat hoss.”

By the time sleepy Betty had reached Morey’s cache of clothing and provisions, old Marsh was well on his way back to his cabin. As Morey stored the valise, basket and blankets in the surrey, his hand fell on a hard round object. Drawing it out into the pale starlight he discovered something tied in an old red bandanna handkerchief.

“This yours, Amos?” he asked, feeling the unyielding contents.

“Das mine, shorely.”

“What is it?”

“Ain’t we gwine to Washn’ton?”

“As soon as we can get there!”

“Ain’t dat officer man dar?”

“Lieutenant Purcell? Yes. But—”

“Da’s my rock.”

“Your rock?”

“Da’s ma rock from de crick. Dat soldier man gwine to git his if we eber comes togeder.”



## CHAPTER XI

### MOREY MAKES AMOS A NOTE.

It was eleven o'clock of a moonless June night when Morey and Amos closed the disjointed gate and turned their backs on Aspley Place. There was a little chill in the air and the vapor of dew. On each side of the broad and rough dirt road little more could be seen than the creeper-covered fences. Neither cabin nor farmhouse showed a light. Even over the distant village of Lee's Court House, toward which old Betty's head was turned, hung a pall of blackness.

Morey was in high spirits. Considering the dire possibilities of his flight he might well have been downhearted. But the spell of coming adventure was on him. He patted his feet on the rickety bottom of the surrey, he whistled, he cocked his feet on the loose dashboard as he smacked the lines on Betty's back, and he hummed the darky songs that Amos knew. But Amos did not join in the choruses. The black boy was far from being in jovial spirits.

"Yo' all ain't gwine plumb thro' de town is yo'?"



This was his first concern.

“You don’t think the marshal is awake now, do you?” answered Morey, with a resounding “Giddap, Betty.”

“He’s loafin’ on de square, ef de saloons is open,” Amos assured him.

“Perhaps it would be safer to go around,” concluded Morey, “but it’s a long way.”

There were no side streets in the village.

“De longes’ way roun’ is de bestes’,” was Amos’ advice.

As they approached the village, more than one light could be seen, and Morey, a little to his own disgust, permitted himself to turn out and make a long detour around the town. This accomplished, it was then nearly midnight—he took the main road to Warrenton. That town was fifteen miles distant. It had now grown so cool that both boys wrapped blankets about themselves, and half asleep and with little to say, they bobbed against each other while Betty jogged along.

The night seemed endless. There was no comfort in trying to sleep curled up on the rear seat—the road was too rough. Suddenly Morey roused himself. He had fallen asleep, and he awoke to find Betty standing by the roadside,



nibbling at the clover in the fence corner. It was lighting up in the east and the haze of early dawn outlined the road dropping away before him into a wide valley over which lay a heavy mist. Amos was leaning against him, sound asleep. It was time for Betty to rest and feed.

Pushing the tired animal forward again until the bottom of the valley was reached, Morey came to what he was looking for—a little creek. Running south was a “river” road. Turning on to this until he was well into a bottom land grove of trees, he aroused Amos.

“Wake up, boy; camp number one!”

The colored boy aroused himself and then fell over asleep again.

“Breakfast!” exclaimed Morey in his ear.

Instantly he bolted upright, glanced about in an alarmed way and groaned. Blinking his eyes he whispered:

“Marse Morey, I done had a bad dream.”

“Well, you dream about unhooking Betty and finding her some water and grass.”

“I done dream dat old crazy man yo’ all’s tellin’ ’bout been chasin’ me.”

“Don Quixote?”

“Da’s him. He been ridin’ right hyar wid us in de back seat.” And Amos turned sud-



denly as if expecting to see the ghost of the old knight sitting in the surrey.

Morey laughed as he forced Betty through the underbrush.

“What did he say?”

“He been shoutin’ ‘Go on, niggah! Go on, white boy! I’s wid you!’ No, sah, I ain’t gwine on, I’s gwine home. Dat ol’ boy sho’ly don’ mean no good. Da’s his ghos’—I seen him. He cain’t conjure me, no, sah. I don’t reckon I’ll go no further. Marse Morey, dat ol’ hoss done played out a’ready.”

Morey was on the ground limbering his stiffened limbs and laughing.

“If I could just find my knife I lost,” he murmured while he felt in his pockets, “I’d cut a new whip.”

Amos started, opened his mouth and closed it nervously and then climbed from the surrey without further comment.

“If any one stole that knife,” continued Morey, “and I ever found it out I’d get Marshal Robinson to lock him up. I paid a dollar and a half for that knife—”

Amos was already busy with Betty. There was no further complaint about old Don Quixote conjuring him. When the mare had been



watered in the creek and tied in a bunch of grass where she might find what sustenance she could, the sleepy boys had some cold biscuits, jelly and water, and, with a blanket under them and another over them, they turned in for a nap.

About noon Morey awoke, stiffer than ever and hungry as a young bear. The sun had made its way down through the foliage and he was wet with perspiration. Amos, the blanket still over his head, was snoring like a rip saw. As the white boy reached over to twist Amos' nose his hand felt something hard on the blanket by his side. It was his purloined knife. It had slipped from the black boy's pocket. When Amos finally aroused himself he saw his white companion sitting by his side carefully examining the knife.

A look of wild alarm lengthened Amos' face. Claspings his big black hand against his pocket he exclaimed:

“Whar yo' git dat?”

Morey smiled and pointed to their improvised bed.

“I found it here between us—here on the blanket.”

“I ain't stole no knife! Yo' ain't 'spicion me, is yo'?”



"I'd hate to think you'd steal."

"Cross ma h'aht, I ain't stole yo' knife."

Morey smiled.

"I wonder who put it here?" he said.

"Marse Morey," exclaimed Amos suddenly.

"I know who done bring yo' knife back. De ghos' ob de ole crazy man, he brung it. Dat ol' ghos' I see in de back seat, he tryin' to conjure us. Da's what."

"Old Don Quixote's spirit?"

"Dat old crazy man's sure wid us. Better look out, Marse Morey. I'se gwine put a charm on de ole conjure dis night ef I kin fin' any spunk water."

"And you didn't take my knife?"

"Don't you 'sult me, Marse Morey. Don't yo' let ole Keyhole put sech notions in yo' head. How come dat knife hyar? Yo' ast old Keyhole ghos'—don' ast me. I reckon we better be git-tin ouah eatin'."

The noonday meal made deep inroads in the stock of provisions. When the adventurers had reached the main road again, crossed the stream and ascended to the far side of the valley, Warrenton was before them. They were less than twenty miles from home and were a little nervous about being seen so near to Lee's Court



House, but it was necessary to pass through the village to inquire their way. This led them almost north.

At two o'clock Betty pulled into the settlement of Baltimore in Farquar county. The next town would be Centerville in Fairfax County, eighteen miles beyond. Baltimore was a cross-roads village with a "hotel," a blacksmith shop and two stores. At the hotel, where Betty was watered from a moss-covered wooden trough as big as a bath tub, Morey spent twenty-five cents of his fortune for oats. Crossing the street to the general store, he expended twenty cents more for bologna sausage and five cents for some very old and musty crackers.

About four o'clock, in a shady spot by a little unbridged stream, a halt was made and Betty was given water and oats. The two boys regaled themselves with bread, bologna and jelly. The afternoon was drowsily warm. Betty was tired and the cool shade was inviting. Both boys fell into a doze. In a half hour or so Morey was awakened by a violent torrent of exclamations. Amos was chasing and belaboring a gaunt roadside hog. Of their food the only article left by this rascally thief was the tin of preserves. The last of their bread, crackers and all their pork



had disappeared. When Amos returned, hot and angry, he held a scrap of salt pork rind.

"Why didn't you put the things in the wagon, Sancho?" laughed Morey.

"Dat ain't no Sanko, da's a hog. All ouah suppah and breakfus' and dinnah gone now. How far dat Wash'ton?"

"We'll get there tomorrow," explained the white boy with another laugh.

Amos scratched his head.

"We gwine to eat, den?"

"If we have luck."

"Den I reckon we better has'en on."

Further investigation revealed another calamity. Betty, prowling about, had discovered the paper bag of oats in the rear of the surrey. She had leisurely consumed the feed reserve.

"Never mind," expostulated Morey, "there's grass and water."

"I cain't eat no grass," remonstrated the black boy.

"Here's preserves," suggested Morey.

"I want's meat, da's what I wants."

"You've had enough meat for one day," laughed Morey, who, being full of bologna sausage, crackers and jelly, refused to bother about



the future. "We can boil some greens in our quart cup this evening."

The colored boy began to wipe the piece of pork rind on the grass.

"But no pork—just grass and water," went on Morey.

At seven o'clock the white houses of Centerville rose above the orchards on a distant hill. The road was up grade and Amos had been walking to relieve Betty. He had been shaking his head and growling about the absence of supper. They had just passed a cabin, some distance back from the road, when Morey heard a squawk and a flutter and turned in time to see the colored boy throw himself on a fat hen. Before Morey could call out Amos was on his feet and with one swift, deft whirl he had wrung the chicken's neck. Springing forward he hurled the still kicking fowl into the wagon and springing up behind called out:

"Git goin', Marse Morey, de ole woman comin'."

Over the tops of the fence weeds Morey could just make out an excited colored woman waddling towards the road stile.

"Da's mah chicken, da's mah fowl," she was crying.



“Giddap, Betty,” shouted Amos. “De ole woman got a stick. Make has’e.”

Instead, Morey drew the old horse up sharply and sprang out.

As the panic-stricken old mammy came rolling down the road, shaking her stick and yelling “Da’s mah chicken,” the white boy began calling, in turn:

“All right, Aunty, don’t get excited. We made a mistake.”

“Gib me mah fowl,” wailed the colored woman.

“Two bits,” shouted Morey, “two bits.”

As he held up his last quarter the old colored woman’s angry face softened. Having satisfied her, Morey returned to the vehicle and the astounded Amos.

“Now,” began Morey, “if we should happen upon a toll gate, we’re stuck. I haven’t a cent.”

Amos shifted uneasily.

“Wha’fo’ you gwine waste yo’ two bits dat way? We could git away!”

“It was burning a hole in my pocket,” answered his white companion. “But, Amos, when you want to steal you’d better not let me know it.”

“Dat wan’t stealin’. Da’s a wild chicken.”



"I hope it is. We'll have game for breakfast."

"Yo' jes' fro' dat two bits away," growled Amos.

Betty had been urged ahead and Centerville was just before them. Amos had crawled into the rear seat and was mumbling to himself about the chicken and the squandered quarter. At last Morey felt a touch on his arm.

"Ef we all had dat money we could get some crackers and cheese, couldn't we?"

"You'll get chicken broiled on a stick if you get anything tonight. But I reckon we ought to save the chicken for tomorrow."

"Cheese and crackers would go pow'ful well. Dey's got cheese in dis town."

Morey whirled about to retort angrily that the "quarter" episode was closed. But, instead of reprimanding his colored servitor, he paused with mouth wide open. Amos' big black hand was stretched out towards him. In it were six nickels.

"Dat two bits?" inquired Amos, in doubt.

"Where did you get that?" asked Morey, recovering from his surprise.

"I's got money, I has. Dar's yo' two bits yo' fussin' 'bout."



“Have you any more?” asked the white boy, eagerly.

“I’s got mah banjo money. I been savin’ fo’ to git a banjo fo’ two berry-pickin’s.”

“How much?”

Amos shook his head.

“Ah been too busy to ezackly count it.”

“Let me see—let me count it.”

Slowly and with some misgiving, Amos drew from his pocket a long-used handkerchief with a knot in one corner. Morey pulled up Betty along the road and climbed into the rear of the surrey. Hardly waiting for the hesitating black boy to hand over the little treasure Morey took the handkerchief, slipped the knot and dumped the earnings of many a day’s work in the berry patches on the seat.

A crumpled two dollar bill; three silver half dollars; three dimes; six nickels, and twenty-eight copper cents.

“Good for you, Amos! Why didn’t you tell me you had all this money?”

“How much money I got dar?”

“Four dollars and thirty-eight cents.”

“How much is dat, wid dis?” asked Amos, holding out his six nickels.



“That makes four dollars and fifty-eight cents.”

“Da’s why I’s goin’,” exclaimed Amos, his eyes glittering for the first time that day, and his sunken cheeks swelling with a happy smile. “I’s gwine to Wash’ton to git mah banjo.”

Morey gathered up the loose coins, took the nickels from Amos’ clinched fingers and slowly dropped the treasure into his own pocket. The black boy gazed open mouthed—too alarmed to speak. This done, Morey took out his little note book, his pencil, and on a page of the book he wrote, hastily:

“I promise to pay Amos Green \$4.58 one day after date, at 7% interest.

“MORTIMER MARSHALL.”

“There, Amos, that’s a note. I’ve borrowed your money. You’ll get interest on it now. We’ll stop at the Grand Central Hotel in Centerville tonight like gentlemen. Giddap, Betty.”

And, while the stiffened old mare began trotting along again toward the village, Amos sat as if in a trance, with Morey’s note in his clumsy fingers.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE RUNAWAYS DISCOVERED.

A little after seven o'clock, those citizens of Centerville who were diligently loafing in front of the Center House, were amused to see a wobbling vehicle dash up to that hostelry with an extraordinary burst of speed. It was hardly necessary to check the steed that drew the Marshall surrey, for old Betty stopped of her own accord at sight of the water trough.

"Boy," exclaimed Morey, in a gracious but positive command, "see to the animal."

Amos was nonplussed. In the days when the Center House was the Fairfax Inn there had been ample stable and coach room in the rear, but these existed no longer. While Morey made his way into the office of the hotel, Amos stood holding Betty's bridle. Morey registered: "Mortimer Marshall and servant, Lee's Court House, Va."

"Want a regular room for the nigger?" asked the proprietor.

That had not occurred to Morey.

"What are your rates?" he asked, a little alarmed.



“Supper’s over,” explained the host, “unless you want a special meal. Reg’lar rates \$2 per day.” Then he looked out and had another glance at Amos. “I reckon I kin make it half price fur the boy. But ef we git supper for you it’ll be extra.”

Morey made a rapid calculation. He was tired and hungry and wanted a bath. It couldn’t come to over \$2.50.

“I am traveling,” he answered, “and a little tired. The accommodations along the road are not the best. If you have a young chicken I’d like it broiled with a baked potato, some hot biscuits, fruit and coffee. My boy will eat with me—”

“We’ve got ham and eggs and tea,” remarked the landlord.

“That will do very nicely,” replied Morey smiling.

“What you goin’ to do with your hoss?”

“My servant will look after the animal.”

“Hain’t got no stable here. Two blocks up,” exclaimed the Center House host, as he retreated toward the kitchen.

When Amos had carried Morey’s bag into the office he drove Betty to “Abson’s Livery, Feed and Sale Stable,” while Morey, unassisted as to



his bag, followed the proprietor to his room. Making a brief toilet he waited for the supper bell. In the course of twenty minutes, hearing a commotion outside, he stepped to the window. But it was too dark to see anything. Yet his suspicions were aroused.

“Hello boy, goin’ to meetin’?”

“Purty slick nigger, eh?”

Morey rushed downstairs. On the newly sprinkled board sidewalk and in the full glare of the light stood Amos, a picture of smiles and colors. In Morey’s trousers—his “meetin’ pants,”—shoes, and one of Morey’s two-year-old hats, a starchless but glaring white shirt, a paper collar and a blue ready-made necktie in which shone an elaborately mounted red stone, Amos was ready for the admiration of Center-ville.

“Rigged out to beat yer boss!” shouted another humorist.

“Yer meal’s ready,” interrupted the proprietor.

Morey beckoned to the colored boy and led him into the dining-room.

“What in the world does this mean, Amos? Where’d you get all this stuff?”



“Don’t you bodder ’bout whar I git dat. Dese is mah Sunday clo’es.”

“This isn’t Sunday. What’d you dress up that way for?”

“Whar I gwine leab ’em? I ain’t no trunk. I ain’t gwine leab dese garmens’ in no liberty stable.”

Morey laughed.

“You’re pretty gay for a boy who hasn’t a cent!”

“Cain’t I hab ten cents, Marse Morey?”

“What do you want ten cents for? You’ve eaten.”

“I allays has some cin’mon draps w’en I’s dressed up. An’ I wants one dem cahds, one of dem pitcher cahds, to send back to pa at de Co’ht House.”

“You mean one of those picture postal cards?”

“I ain’t nebber had none o’ dem cahds yit.”

Morey laughed.

“You can have cinnamon drops, Amos, but we’re not sending back post cards yet.”

The two boys consumed their ham and eggs and left the dining-room.

“Mr. Marshall,” exclaimed the proprietor, as Morey passed through the combination parlor



and office, "I reckon you know 'taint customary for colored persons to eat in the main dinin' room."

"I don't object," answered the boy.

"Some o' the folks about here is findin' fault."

"But we were in there alone."

"It's the principle o' the thing. Colored folks has their place."

"Why didn't you say so before he went in?"

"I reckoned you all knowed it."

"Well I didn't. We'll leave your place if you prefer."

"Oh ye're welcome, yerself, an' I reckon he kin stay. But I'm allowin' yo' ought to pay ex-try fer him instid o' half price."

Morey looked at the proprietor and his usually smiling face changed to a cold expression. Then he smiled.

"You are the proprietor, aren't you?"

"Me and my wife."

"Well, I am Mortimer Marshall, of Aspley Place, Lee's Court House. In my part of Virginia a contract is a contract. Where I go my boy goes."

"A nigger 'at kin dress like that coon, kin pay his bills, I reckon."



“Do you want your money now?”

The landlord's loud talk had attracted a half dozen town worthies who now crowded into the little room. The landlord was mad.

“I knowed who you was as soon as you drive up,” he retorted.

As the agitated hotel keeper reached over and picked up a newspaper from the ink-smeared desk the curious onlookers crowded forward, Amos among them. The matter that had been the sole topic of conversation for the last half hour was coming to a dramatic sequel.

“I knowed you. I reckon you all thought we don't see no newspapers in Centerville. How about this piece in the paper?”

Morey took the paper, followed the direction of a shaking finger and read:

## MURDEROUS ASSAULT

ON MEMBER OF BENCH.

Scion of Aristocratic Virginia Family  
Attacks Ex-Jurist.

“Lee's Court House, Virginia.—About noon today Mortimer Marshall, the son of the late Colonel Aspley Marshall of Aspley Place, made a mysterious and as yet unexplained attack on Ex-Judge E. L. Lomax, in the latter's offices in



this city. Marshall escaped, but will be arrested in the morning. The jurist, who had lain unconscious for over an hour, finally managed to call for assistance and he is now lying at his home with probably fatal wounds. So far, he has been unable to give but a fragmentary account of the assault which he says was wholly unprovoked and made when his back was turned. Some blunt instrument was used—”

Morey threw the paper on the floor.

“That’s a lie, mainly,” he exclaimed.

“Anyway we don’t want no runaways in the Center House.”

“Amos,” ordered Morey, “get my bag.”

“Oh, I reckon not,” spoke up the hotel owner, “not ’till you pony up.”

Amos responded promptly. One over-eager spectator, the one who had referred to him as a “slick nigger,” he jostled smartly to one side. With a set jaw and a look of defiance at the proprietor, Morey turned, passed down the hall and mounted the stairs to the room assigned him. A moment later he was in the office. Dropping his bag vigorously on the floor he exclaimed:

“What’s my bill?”

The owner of the place had lost a little cour-



age by this time. But he stepped around behind the desk, cleared his throat and said:

“You used that room and it’s the same as though you slept in it. That’s a dollar. Your supper was 35 cents. The nigger’s supper ’ll be 70 cents. That’s \$2.05.”

Morey walked up to the desk. “The room may be \$1.00 a day. You’ve driven me out of it. I’ll not pay a cent for it. My supper is all right and a good one for the money. This boy’s meal was to be half price. That’s 17½ cents. My bill is 52½ cents. Here’s 53.”

He slapped the coins on the desk and faced the spectators.

“Now you loafers fall back or you’ll get what the ex-jurist got and right in front instead of from behind. Scat!”

A panic struck the open-mouthed Centerville citizens and they bumped against each other in their fright. As the two boys were about to step from the room the man behind the desk made a feeble request.

“Some one o’ you git the marshal.”

“For what?” snapped Morey.

“Fo’ dis,” sounded by his side, and Amos, the bag in one hand, shoved forward the red bandanna containing his carefully preserved rock.



“De fus’ pusson crosses mah path gits dis on de haid. It’s a dornick.”

Without interruption Morey and the valiant Amos made their way to the livery barn. The proprietor, one of the panic-stricken hotel spectators, came running after them. With nervous energy he assisted Amos in hitching up Betty.

“What’s *your* bill?” asked Morey.

The man hesitated.

“I reckon you done owe me ’bout two bits.”

Slowly climbing into the surrey, Morey said:

“Here’s fifty cents for you and I want you to take a message to your marshal. If he hasn’t a warrant for my arrest he’d better not follow me. If he does—I’ll break his head.”

“I reckon you all kin sleep in my barn if you ain’t got no hotel.”

“Thanks,” retorted Morey, “I’ve had enough of Centerville. It’s small potatoes.”

Passing the drug and grocery store a moment later, in spite of the already growing crowd of curious persons, he stopped Betty, alighted and entered the place.

“Got any cinnamon drops?” asked Morey.

The proprietor, a little out of breath, finally discovered a jar of the confection several years old.



“Gimme a nickel’s worth!”

Gaping faces were in the door while this transaction was in progress. But as Morey left, a clear path instantly opened before the desperate fugitive.

“Amos,” he said, springing into the surrey, “here’s your cinnamon drops. And for goodness’ sake don’t put on those clothes again without telling me.”

“Marse Morey,” exclaimed Amos with a sigh, “I’s ’bliged fo’ dem cin’mon draps, but is we gwine drive all night?”

“There is a real town on ahead, only seven miles. If the hotel is more hospitable we’ll sleep there.”

“How much ma’ money dat gwine cos’?”

“Don’t you bother about money. I’m the one to worry. You are protected. You have my note.”

“I’s got de note all right. But I don’ see no banjo.”

“Forget the banjo. We are playing for higher stakes.”

“Steaks? We don’ need no steaks. We’s got a fat pullet.”

“Eat your cinnamon drops and be happy,” laughed Morey. “Giddap,” he clucked to the



tired Betty and they rolled slowly out of Centerville.

Suddenly, his mouth full of the spicy confection, Amos grabbed Morey by the shoulder.

“Don’ look dat way, look dis way.”

Whirling the white boy on the seat Amos pointed to the western horizon. The thin sickle of a new moon was just visible.

“Yo’ come nigh seein’ dat moon ober yo’ right shoulder. Dat’d sho’ly brung us bad luck.”

“What shoulder did *you* see it over?”

“I almos’ seen it ober de left shoulder. I reckon we’s all right. But I’s kind o’ skeered. Dat crazy ole man Keyhole boun’ to come back.”

But if he had come back Amos would have been too tired to recognize the ghost of the old knight. Still sucking at the cinnamon drops he soon fell asleep. When he awoke Morey was dickering with the half-asleep owner of a small hotel in Fairfax. A little of the young Virginian’s assurance was gone. He rather humbly inquired the cost of lodging and breakfast for himself and Amos and stabling for the horse and was glad to close the contract at \$1.50.

It was midnight when he at last found his bed. Mr. Perry’s hotel was really only a poorly pa-



tronized boarding house, but it gave Morey a chance to get his clothes off and to crawl into a bed in which, though it was poor enough, he could straighten out his tired legs. Amos slept on a cot outside of Morey's door. Nor did the boys have the luxury of late hours. They were turned out promptly at the sound of a cracked bell at six o'clock. At seven o'clock, having breakfasted on a few thin slices of very fat bacon and one egg apiece, the refreshed wanderers set forth. Washington, their Mecca, was but eighteen miles away.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ARRIVAL AT FORT MEYER.

The day was just the kind to put vigor and enthusiasm into one. Old Betty ambled along, reasonably frisky after a night's rest, and the country began to show signs of thickening population. Amos began to get a little nervous.

"How much money yo' got now Marse Morey?" he inquired at last, hesitatingly.

"Oh, 'bout two dollars."

"How long dat 'gwine keep us when we git to Wash'ton?"

"Quit your worryin', Amos. I'll look after you. I'll see that you don't go hungry."

"How yo' gwine do dat? I ain't got no mo' money."

"Well in a pinch, I'm going to sell Betty and the surrey."

The colored boy shook his head.

"Yo' don' dast sell Betty. Yo' ma'll skin yo' ef yo' sell de ole hoss. Sides, who gwine buy dis ole trap? Dat hoss ain't wuff—"

"Didn't she carry us all the way here?"



“She sho’ly did, but she cain’t carry us back. Dat hoss ready fo’ to quit. She got de heaves.”

“We can work,” moralized Morey. “We can make two dollars and a half a day working.”

“Yo’ ain’t come hyar to do no wuk, I reckon. How come you go to Wash’ton, Marse Morey?”

“I’m going to make our fortune, Amos. I’ve got a great invention that I’m going to sell. It will give us all the money we can use. Then I’m going to buy a banjo for you and we’re going back home on the cars and fix up the place and be real farmers and have pigs and cows and horses and paint the house and mend the fences and hire hands to run the farm.”

“Look hyar, boy! Yo’ losin’ yo’ min’! Who tol’ yo’ we gwine do all dat? Yo’ done been communin’ wid ole crazy man Keyhole.”

“You wait and see—I’ve got something in my bag that is going to do all that and more—when I sell it.”

“We gwine to have money to ride on de steam cars?”

“You just do as I tell you and follow me and you’ll not only ride on the steam cars but you’ll eat on them.”

“Eat on ’em? Who gwine have time to eat on de steam cars? Yo’ boun’ to look outen de win-



der. I ain't gwine have no time to eat on de cars. Talkin' bout eatin,'" went on Amos, "I reckon we could eat now ef we had de eatin's."

"We dine in Washington this evening, Amos. We won't bother about it until then. Besides, I may not sell my big invention this evening and we've got to string out our \$2."

"Dar's de chicken we done pay two bits fo'."

Morey reached down, caught hold of the stifened fowl and threw it on the roadside.

"It's too old to eat, Amos. Don't you ever get enough food? We just had breakfast. I'll buy you a good dinner. Now shut up."

"One aigg an' a piece o' bacon yo' couldn' grease a saw wid! Dat ain't no breakfus'."

"Amos!" exclaimed Morey sharply, "If you don't quit bothering me about eating I'll ask old man Keyhole tonight where he got that knife. I reckon he knows."

"Well ef yo' kin stan' it, I kin. But I certainly is pow'ful hongry."

There was a little halt at noon to refresh Betty with water and a nibble of grass, during which time Morey washed his face and hands in the creek by the side of which they had stopped. Amos had returned to his old clothes, but Morey now arranged a compromise costume for him,



discarding the pin, tie and hat and making him presentable in his best trousers, shoes and white shirt.

The smoke of Washington was already in sight. By four o'clock the suburban farms had been reached and Amos saw for the first time the environs of a city. The smart, up-to-date homes bewildered him and he drank all in with wide eyes. They were on the highway that leads into Alexandria and Morey was beginning to worry. Just what he was to do now that he had reached the city he did not know. He could not figure out what he and his companion were to attempt first. He would cross the Potomac, enter the city and, he had almost decided, stop at the first stable he could find and sell Betty. This went pretty hard with him, but it was easier than facing the big city with a helpless colored boy on his hands and only \$1.88 in his pocket. With the few dollars that he might get by this means they would find a cheap boarding house and prepare to look up his friend, Lieutenant Purcell. If this required several days or his funds ran out while he was engaged in his negotiations he had one well-defined idea. He would find a job for Amos, some simple labor at which the boy could make enough to keep both going until fortune turned with them.



Before reaching Alexandria the two boys found themselves among the country villas of the middle-class suburbanites. Then the park-like expanse and neatly trimmed hedges of Arlington Cemetery rose on their right. Intent on this pleasing picture, which Amos was slow to believe was a cemetery—a soldier's grave-yard—Morey did not for a time notice another institution on his left. But, when he did look and saw the national colors fluttering from a tall, white flagstaff, and the open parade ground and orderly rows of officers' homes, he knew instinctively that he had stumbled upon Fort Meyer at the front door of the city. His heart leaped.

Giving Betty a slap with the lines he hastened on toward the entrance, through which, in the distance, he could already see a thin stream of people passing. A moment later the surrey reached a sort of rear entrance. Here a soldier on guard duty walked slowly back and forth.

"Is this Fort Meyer?" Morey asked anxiously as they passed.

"That's what."

"May we drive in?"

The soldier, dropping his gun to "parade rest," shook his head but jerked his thumb down the road where people on foot and in carriages were entering.



“Come to see the airship?” he remarked.

“What airship?” asked Morey, eagerly.

“I reckon you’re in time,” said the soldier smiling. “Always in time for them boys. They fuss around all day and then tell you at dark that it’s too windy. But I reckon they ’ll go up today,” he added, glancing skyward.

“What airship is it?” persisted Morey, leaning half out of the vehicle.

“They ain’t but one fur’s the army is concerned,” laughed the soldier, shouldering his gun again—“Wright Brothers. Hustle along and make a bluff. Maybe they’ll let old Dobbin in.”

“Is Lieutenant Purcell here?” continued Morey, much excited.

“If he ain’t gone to town, he is,” was the answer. “He ought to be here. That’s his business. He’s the boss of the job.”

A few minutes later Morey and Amos were in the line of spectators making their way toward the reservation parade grounds. But Betty could go only within the limits of the fort, where Morey turned her over to Amos with orders to await his return. Then he hurried after the crowd. Undoubtedly it was a gala day. Hundreds of fashionably dressed women and



smartly costumed men were defying the dust of the paths leading to the wide parade grounds and officers with gold, red and yellow facings on their uniforms were hurrying by in mule-drawn military busses.

Near what seemed to be a sort of club-house a group of soldiers stood idly. On the gallery, a number of guests were collected in animated groups. While Morey was debating whether to make his way thither before seeking the parade ground where, he had already learned, Orville Wright was to give an exhibition test of his wonderful aeroplane, there was the sharp blast of a bugle and the clatter of horses' feet. An open carriage dashed by with three men in it, preceded by a bunch of galloping cavalrymen. Hats flew off in all directions and a few of the spectators cheered.

It was Morey's first view of a President of the United States. Throwing his own hat into the air he lit out on a run after the swiftly moving carriage, and then, suddenly noticing that there were no other boys present and that no one else was excited in just the same manner, he calmed down and smiled.

"Where's the airship?" asked the boy, seeing that the President was bound first for the club-



house, but figuring that he would proceed to the testing grounds.

The smart young soldier to whom Morey had addressed his remark said:

“The high white tent is where the big bugs ’ll be. You keep away from that or they’ll hustle you. Them secret service ducks got to make a flash. They won’t let you in a mile o’ the President. The airship stable is the wooden house between the tent and them barracks. An’ you keep your eye peeled. They ain’t anxious to have kids around.”

Morey had no trouble. He was frequently told to move on, but this did not bother him. Long before the President and the other important guests had arrived at the tent of honor the boy was a part of the group before the airship house. He forgot Amos, Betty and even Lieutenant Purcell. Pushing through the crowd he kept always in front, and, whenever it became necessary to clear out the interfering spectators, Morey was always the first one shoved aside.

In the intervals he saw the mysterious machine, drank in its details, watched all the fascinating work of preparation, gazed in open-mouthed wonder on the wizard who was to dem-



onstrate the wonders of the fragile craft and, when he could, stole nearer to the magic apparatus. When the tooting band marched across the worn and dusty expanse of the parade ground, instead of rushing away with the crowd to welcome the Chief Magistrate and the other distinguished guests, Morey took advantage of the laxity of the guards to steal up to the shed itself.

On a box sat two men, one of them the celebrated aviator whom Morey had already seen inspecting the track, and the other a military man. A workman had already sung out "Skid-doo, kid!" when a familiar voice stopped the lad. Morey recognized at a glance Lieutenant Purcell, hot of face, black of hands and in his shirt sleeves, but the soldier in spite of all.

"Get out!" exclaimed Mr. Wright.

"One moment!" interrupted the officer, laying his hand on the aviator's arm and whispering to him: "Come here," he added, motioning to Morey.

"This is Morey, isn't it?" he smiled, extending his soiled hand. "I'm awfully glad to see you. Did you get the rod and my note? And what are you doing here? Excursion?"

"I drove here," responded Morey, a little



abashed, "and I came—I reckon—I came to find you."

"To see me? Well, that's good of you. Are you alone?"

"Amos is with me," laughed Morey. "Your friend, the colored boy."

"Oh, I remember," laughed the officer. "I hope he is well."

"Well and hungry," answered Morey. And then he blushed.

"You came to see me?" went on the officer. "Then I hope, as soon as I am through with our afternoon's work, to see you at my quarters. Ask any one for my house. Come for dinner and bring Amos. I must make my peace with the boy." And he laughed again.

"Did you ever see an aeroplane before?" inquired Mr. Wright politely, as if feeling that he had to say something.

"I was around Mr. Curtiss' shop a good deal last month," explained Morey, "and I've done some gliding myself."

"Oh I see," interrupted Lieutenant Purcell. "Then you are interested."

"I certainly am," said Morey. "That's why I came here to see you. I want to consult you about an idea I have—it was my father's."



Mr. Wright smiled.

“They’ve all got it,” he remarked.

“They haven’t all got this,” replied Morey abruptly. “Even *you* haven’t got it. But I think you will have it, some day.”

Both men looked at him questioningly.

“Well,” answered Mr. Wright with a laugh, “we try a new idea every day. Perhaps yours is the one we are after.”

As the two men heard the sound of a bugle they sprang to their feet.

“Can I help you launch her?” asked Morey anxiously.

Mr. Wright laughed again.

“Why not?” he answered. “If you have ideas about these machines you certainly will beat these clumsy soldiers.”

“Take off your coat, Morey,” remarked the Lieutenant, “and get busy. Then, when we are through, we’ll see about your idea.”



## CHAPTER XIV

### A SCREW LOOSE.

Morey, elated over the great privilege granted him, lost no time in taking advantage of it. While Mr. Wright, Lieutenant Purcell and the experienced workmen who were to assist in launching the aeroplane were hurrying the last preparations, he crowded close to the craft. It was beautiful in its fragile symmetry and Morey hung over it as an artist might examine a picture. An attendant was pouring in gasoline and Mr. Wright was intently watching him when a middle-aged military man entered the shed.

"Everything all right?" he exclaimed in a full deep voice.

"So far as we know," answered Mr. Wright, smiling. "But that is what we never know exactly. If I had a guarantee that it was, I wouldn't hesitate to go up a thousand feet."

As he said this he shook hands with the new arrival. Lieutenant Purcell promptly saluted and exclaimed: "Major Squiers."

Morey took another look. This, then, was the



head of the U. S. Signal Corps—the army authority on ballooning and air navigation. Morey knew that he was looking at the best posted man in the country on the subject that so appealed to him, and he wondered if he might get the opportunity to lay his father's plans before such an authority.

“Looks like a fine afternoon for the trial,” went on the visitor. “The President is ready. You can go when you like. I wish you luck.”

Just then his eye fell on Morey and he frowned.

“He's all right,” remarked Mr. Wright. “That's our new assistant—he isn't in the way.”

“Well,” said the Major—his frown relaxing—“you must look out for strangers.”

“I'll answer for this young man,” spoke up Lieutenant Purcell. At the same time he stepped to his superior and spoke in a low voice.

Morey was already lost again in his intent examination of the airship. He had never seen anything that so interested him. The machines at Hammondsport were experimental and roughly finished. This white winged, complete car appealed to his enthusiasm and he was already in a land of dreams. If there had ever



been any doubt about his ambition this meeting with the great wizard of the air and this close contact with his fairy-like creation would have decided Morey's future. He determined to become an aviator and the owner of such a craft if it took years of effort.

In the midst of his close inspection of the waiting machine the boy started, looked again, and then turned to those in charge. The eager attendants had just taken their stands ready to shoulder the long spruce framework to carry it outside the house to the starting track.

"Mr. Wright," whispered Morey, touching the great inventor on the arm, "look here. I think a link of your chain drive is bent."

Mr. Wright and Lieutenant Purcell sprang forward together as Morey laid his finger on one of the little steel squares of the right hand link belt used to connect one of the propellers with the engine. One corner was bent sharply upward. The first examination showed that the steel link was cracked. Mr. Wright spoke under his breath as his helpers crowded about him and then ordered the doors closed. The next few moments were busy ones. Every one sprang to the task of repairing the damage. Mr. Wright with a wrench loosened the chain





MR. WRIGHT SPRANG FORWARD.







while others brought punches and a substitute link. When the defective bit of steel had been removed and a new link put in its place the perspiring inventor arose, wiped his forehead, and turned to those watching him. He had picked up the broken bit of metal. After looking at it intently and showing it to Lieutenant Purcell he turned to Morey.

“How did you happen to see that, my boy?”

“Oh, I just noticed it—I thought they ought to be perfect, all of them. So I looked ’em all over. I knew a bad one might dump you.”

“I certainly would have been dumped and worse. It might have been my last flight. I can’t say much except that I thank you. Here,” he added, laughing, “take this as a souvenir.” He handed Morey the broken link. “And whenever you see it, just remember that I’d be glad to do something for you.”

A few minutes later the aeroplane was out and on the track and as it sailed away to the applause of the hundreds watching it only a few knew that the country boy already racing over the dusty parade ground beneath the hovering airship had counted for so much in making the experiment possible and successful. It was indeed successful, for it was on this mo-



mentous day that Mr. Wright demonstrated to the Signal Corps and the world that his aeroplane could fly forty-five miles an hour. In doing this the machine was in the air a little over an hour.

As it finally drifted toward the landing place after circling the course many times the first face that the straining aviator made out was Morey's. And it was Morey's proud assertion, many a time later, that it was of him that Mr. Wright asked—

“Did I do it?”

In the excitement that followed, Mr. Wright and Lieutenant Purcell disappeared. As soon as the aircraft was within the shed those gentlemen were carried away by Major Squiers to meet the President, who had hastened forward to compliment the nifty aviator. But Morey had no thoughts of distinguished guests. With his coat off he now helped to carry the aeroplane into the house and, with the other workmen, to adjust it on its supporting trusses. The attendants were excited and enthusiastic and they worked over the car as if it had been an exhausted race horse, cleaning the engine, tightening the bolts holding the wires and looking over every truss and brace for possible fracture.



“Hello there, Morey—I thought we had lost you. I’ve been looking for you. Why didn’t you come and see the President?”

It was Lieutenant Purcell, looking spick and span in his full dress uniform.

“I didn’t know it was so late,” answered Morey. “But I’ve had a fine time.”

“I think we’ll have to make you a member of the corps,” remarked the officer.

Morey gave a startled look.

“Me?” he exclaimed. “A member of the Signal Corps?”

“Of course I was joking. But I never saw any one who seemed to take so naturally to this as you do.”

Morey had donned his coat and was walking with the officer toward the barracks. They discussed generally the exciting events of the day and then Morey returned to the suggestion made by his companion.

“What do you mean by joining the corps?”

“I was joking,” explained the Lieutenant. “Of course you couldn’t. You would have to enlist as a soldier. I merely thought of it because we are trying to find a few youngsters to train in this aeroplane service.”

“Well,” exclaimed Morey promptly—his



eyes glittering—"why couldn't I enlist as a soldier?"

The lieutenant looked at him in surprise.

"In the first place," he replied with a smile, "I imagine your mother would not consent or want you to do it. You are too young."

"But what if I had her consent?"

"You couldn't afford to do it. Soldiers don't live as you live. You'd have to work."

Morey was silent a few moments. Then, reaching the clubhouse, he asked Lieutenant Purcell if they might not sit down at a table in a corner of the wide gallery. In the next ten minutes the boy frankly told the story of his situation. The officer listened in surprise, but sympathetically. Nothing was omitted from the boy's story.

"I want to dispose of my father's idea," Morey concluded, "and I must make arrangements to see that my mother is not driven from her home by the men she thinks are her best friends. But when those things are accomplished I've got to go to work for a living. I'm no farmer and was never meant to be one. If, by joining the army, I can enter the signal corps to study aviation, I'd like to do it. *I mean to do it.*"

His friend took his hand.



“My boy,” exclaimed Lieutenant Purcell, “you certainly have a task ahead of you. I can see that you mean to accomplish it. But, you’ll need help. I’m going to help you all I can. We’ll begin this evening. Major Squiers will be at my home for dinner. We’ll begin with him so far as your father’s plans are concerned. You’ll stay with me tonight, and tomorrow I’ll take you into the city and will talk with some real estate men I know. Meanwhile, we will think no more of your enlistment. You don’t understand what it means.”

“In the signal corps I’d have a chance to be taught how to handle an aeroplane, wouldn’t I?”

“Yes,” conceded the lieutenant, “and I think you would be our star pupil. But the pay—”

“That isn’t it,” interrupted Morey. “I wouldn’t have to stay in the corps. If I’m a success I could buy out and then—”

The officer laughed.

“Don’t you think you have enough to bother about before that comes up?”

“I certainly have,” answered Morey. “But I’m looking ahead. Anyway, I’m a thousand times grateful to you. I’d like to meet Major Squiers and show him what I have. Then I’d



better go on into the city and meet you tomorrow, if you'll be good enough?"

"You will stay with me tonight. Why not?"

"I've got Amos with me," answered Morey with a knowing smile.

"We'll take care of Amos, if he is my enemy," laughed the officer.

Lieutenant Purcell was a bachelor, but his quarters were comfortably furnished. He and Morey had lingered on the club house veranda for some time, talking over Colonel Marshall's mysterious packet while a corporal went in quest of Amos and Betty. Soon after the officer and his guest reached the former's house the corporal returned with the report that the horse and surrey had been found and cared for, but that the colored boy could not be found. Morey was alarmed. He proposed an immediate personal search; but at that moment the telephone rang.

After talking for some minutes over the telephone the lieutenant, with much laughing, hung up the receiver.

"He's found," he explained, roaring with amusement. "He's in the guard house."

Morey sprang up in alarm.

"Yes," went on his host, "but they are going to bring him here."



“In the guard house?” exclaimed Morey.

“The secret service men arrested him early this afternoon. He was found prowling about in the rear of the President’s tent with a rock tied up in a red handkerchief.”

“Why, that was for you,” explained Morey nervously, but laughing in spite of himself. “He’s carried that all the way to Washington to get even with you for ducking him.”

“That’s what he finally confessed,” roared Lieutenant Purcell again. “They’ve just had him before Captain Bryant, the officer of the day. When he told who he was and who he was with, Captain Bryant fortunately recalled that you were my guest—I had been telling him about you. So, concluding that Amos and I could settle our own feud, they are bringing him here to turn him over to us.”

Amos’ armed escort arrived at that moment. When Morey and his host stepped out on the piazza two grinning soldiers and a very much alarmed colored boy stood before them. One of the guards held in his hand the incriminating rock, still concealed in its anarchistic covering. The colored boy burst into tears at sight of Morey and sank on his knees.

“I ain’t done no hahm, Mr. Soldier. I don’



mean hahm to no one," blubbered Amos, "I's jes' lookin' 'bout."

Lieutenant Purcell took the weighty weapon and dismissed the soldiers.

"Amos," he said, as severely as he could, "what's the meaning of this rock? Why are you carrying it with you?"

"Deed, Mr. Soldier, I's keepin' dat kaze I's 'feared o' robbers."

"Do you want it again?"

"No, sah, Mr. Soldier, no, sah."

"They say over at the jail that you said it was for me; that you wanted to break my head with it?"

"Me?" whimpered Amos. "No, sah, Mr. Soldier. Dey's story-tellers. 'Deed dey is. Please, Marse Morey," he wailed, "don' let 'em bring me to de jail agin. I ain't mad at no one, 'bout nothin'. Please, Mr. Soldier!"

Lieutenant Purcell and Morey could no longer restrain their laughter. Amos was forgiven, assured that he had already been punished for his desperate resolve and turned over to Lieutenant Purcell's domestics for supper and lodging.



## CHAPTER XV

### TWO IRONS IN THE FIRE.

When Major Squiers arrived he greeted Morey cordially.

“Lieutenant Purcell and Mr. Wright, between them, have given me a most flattering account of you, my son. I wish we had a few such boys in the corps.”

“I’m anxious to enlist,” Morey exclaimed at once.

This was Lieutenant Purcell’s chance. He was not slow to express his own views in opposition to Morey’s desires. But, perhaps to his surprise, Major Squiers did not agree with him.

“The science of air navigation,” the elder officer insisted, “is yet in its infancy. In the nature of things the army is intensely interested in the development of both dirigible balloons and areoplanes. In some respects I think the study of this problem is as important as the solution of new naval problems. As a means of offense and defense the army is compelled to



keep abreast if it does not lead in these experiments. And we mean to do it. But, for the greatest success, we must have brains. We must have just the intelligence that this young man possesses. Naturally, those who are to assist us, should be under military direction and control; they should be soldiers. And they must begin in the ranks. But I know of no department in the service where promotion is so sure and certain. Nor do I know of any other opportunity for a young man to get a technical education at so little cost to himself. Instead of dissuading the boy, I think he should be encouraged."

"There, you see," exclaimed Morey turning jubilantly to Lieutenant Purcell, "isn't that what I said? Will you enlist me?" he asked eagerly facing Major Squiers again.

"You'll have to obtain your parent's consent. If you can, I'll be glad to do so. And I'll guarantee to make an aviator out of you in a mighty short time."

Until dinner was over nothing was said about Colonel Marshall's secret. Lieutenant Purcell had not yet seen the packet. But, with a few words of explanation from the younger officer, Morey produced the precious package from his



inside coat pocket. The two military experts immediately adjourned to the library and began an investigation. Morey was a little surprised and disappointed that there was no outburst of astonishment. As they proceeded slowly through the faded pages, talking to each other in low tones from time to time, he became nervous. After all, what if his father's idea meant nothing at all? What if their land was worth no more than Judge Lomax said? Enlisting in the Signal Corps would not help him out of his predicament. In fact, it would be a selfish abandonment of his mother

When Major Squiers had at last finished the long manuscript, which Morey himself had not attempted to read or understand, he lit a cigar and waited for the younger officer to finish his examination. Again they spoke together. It was in a low tone and Morey refrained from listening. Lieutenant Purcell made a calculation and shook his head. Morey's heart sank.

At that, the elder officer motioned to the boy to approach.

"My son," he began, "I assume that you are willing to let me take this matter—I mean these papers."

"Certainly," answered Morey. "I have no



idea whether they are of value, but if you will be good enough to look into them, I shall be very grateful."

"You are quite sure no one has seen them?"

"Other than my father, no one. I have not even tried to read them myself."

Lieutenant Purcell glanced at his superior officer.

"He has an idea that may mean a great deal," said Major Squiers. "In carrying out his theory of turning liquid hydrogen into free gas again he has also suggested an apparatus that may solve a difficult problem. We won't try to go into it technically, my son, but I want to show these drawings to the department. Will you trust them to me?"

Overjoyed, Morey gave ready acquiescence. Then he exclaimed:

"Do you think I could have his machine patented?"

Major Squiers laughed and shook his head.

"My son," he explained, "that apparatus is one of the missing links in the theory of carrying liquid hydrogen in balloons. The government of every progressive nation is now searching for it. If we decide that your father's plans are practicable I will undertake to say that the



War Department will buy them outright. But they will never be patented. It will be an aeronautical secret to be guarded jealously from the rest of the world. Are you prepared to sell them outright?"

Morey sprang up radiant. He took the loose sheets from the table, put them tremblingly in order and placed them in Major Squier's hands.

"You are to do with them whatever you think best. I have no suggestions to make, and no conditions."

When Major Squiers had gone, Morey, enthusiastic as a child, laid his arm on Lieutenant Purcell's shoulders.

"Lieutenant," said the boy, "why are you so good to me?"

The young officer grew suddenly sober, was silent a moment, and then said:

"Because I can see how hard you are working to make a good man out of a very foolish boy."

That was a new thought for Morey. Hurt by it at first, he cogitated over it a long time before going to sleep that night. At last, lying in his bed, he smiled. "Wasn't I the limit?" he said to himself. "Buying a four hundred dollar engine on a capital of seventy-five cents!"



Lieutenant Purcell's official duties demanded his attention until noon the next day. But, after luncheon, it was arranged that he and Morey were to go into the city in an electric car and open up negotiations as to selling his mother's land or borrowing money on it. Morey saw at once that the negotiations under way would be extended over several days. He had no desire to force himself upon his new friend's hospitality and he had found it impossible to tell his host that he had but \$1.88 in funds. After puzzling over the matter some time he decided to take advantage of his unoccupied morning to dispose of Betty. He would thus be beyond the necessity of borrowing funds to cover his and Amos' expenses for a short time.

Amos had not wandered far from the lieutenant's quarters. Fear of the guard house kept him close to the kitchen. Calling the black boy, Morey visited the military barn, secured Betty, gave the enlisted hostler a quarter for his good nature, and drove out of the reservation.

When Morey turned old Betty's head to the west, Amos for the first time showed signs of life.

"Da's right, Marse Morey. Le's go back home. Dis no place fo' we all."



“Aren’t you ashamed of yourself, Amos? It’s a lucky thing they didn’t keep you in jail.”

The black boy shook his head and then as the reservation was gradually left behind he began to show boldness.

“Ef dem soldiers did’n have no guns I reckon I’d show ’em.”

“Look here, you rascal, you were scared to pieces. Don’t get so brave. We’re going back again.”

“We gwine back to dat soldier place?”

“We certainly are, and if I hear any more bragging out of you I’ll tell the soldiers.”

Amos shrank perceptibly.

“Dat soldier man ’sulted me.”

“You’d better forget it,” remarked Morey curtly. “I’ve had to forget several things in the past few days.”

As soon as he had passed beyond the more pretentious country places Morey turned into a cross road, and at the first thrifty-looking farmhouse he pulled up. In fifteen minutes the faithful old Betty had been sold for \$30, surrey thrown in, and Morey and Amos were on their way back to the fort, toiling and sweating beneath their bag and bundles.



“How come yo’ did’n leab dese in the barn?” panted Amos.

“Because,” explained Morey, “since Lieutenant Purcell has insulted you I thought you wouldn’t want to sleep and eat in his house. We are going in to Washington.”

“He did’n ’sult me ’bout eatin’. I had roas’ beef las’ night,” Amos retorted, smacking his lips. “I ain’t fussin’ ’bout stayin’ dar.”

Morey was in no mood for further discussion. When he reached the trolley line he boarded a car and a few minutes later had crossed the river and was in Georgetown. Keeping a vigilant lookout he finally discovered, as the car crossed Jefferson street, in the vicinity of a river basin and a maze of railroad tracks, a cheap hotel. As soon as he could stop the car he made his way back. He could get two rooms at the rate of fifty cents each a day, without meals. A bargain was struck and the boys took possession of adjoining apartments. It was a hotel for railroad and dock laborers. Neither rooms nor surroundings were very savory, but they were reasonably clean.

Amos was in somewhat of a panic when he learned that he was to be left here until night.

“Whar’ I gwine to eat?” was his first question.



“Amos,” said Morey with a laugh, “you don’t appreciate your good luck. See that bed? It has sheets on it. You haven’t had sheets in years.”

“No, sah. I don’ want ’em. Dey ain’ gwine keep me wahm.”

“And this apartment is yours. I don’t know how long we’ll be here. But make yourself at home.” He took out of his pocket four silver quarters. “I’ve paid for your room. Down near the dock you’ll find places to eat—fried fish and pork and bread and coffee.”

“How much dat gwine cos’ me?” exclaimed Amos, a grin on his usually somber face.

Morey took up a quarter.

“Never,” he said with a frown, “never, so long as I am paying your bills, spend more than two bits for a meal.”

“No, sah,” responded the black boy. “Ah knows dat—two bits.”

“And now,” said Morey, “you can eat and sleep until I come back. And don’t get lost. Be here by six o’clock or I’ll send the police after you.”

Morey still had time for his toilet. Unpacking his bag he got out fresh linen and while Amos brushed his clothes and shoes he took as



much of a bath as he could get. This done, he locked their rooms, took Amos to a drug store, treated the happy black boy to an ice cream soda, started him back toward the "Basin House," their hotel, and then boarded a car for Fort Meyer.

There was a vigorous protest when he explained that he had removed Amos and their baggage to a hotel.

"But how about the horse?" asked Lieutenant Purcell.

The facts had to come out. Once started, Morey concealed nothing.

The officer laughed.

"Morey," he exclaimed, "you'll certainly win out. I don't blame you. You were more than welcome here, but I suppose I would feel the same way that you do. However, if you run out of funds before something turns up, remember this—I accepted your hospitality as to the trout stream."

Morey laughed in turn.

"That was in my foolish days. We didn't own any more of that trout creek that you did."

Within an hour after luncheon the officer and Morey were in the city and in a well-known real estate and loan office. A clerk passed them on



to Lieutenant Purcell's friend, who gave Morey's long story his personal attention. The manager began shaking his head at once. But, when Morey mentioned Major Carey and the Barber Bank, he took a new attitude. Turning to his desk he looked in an index and then, excusing himself, went into the outer office and after some minutes returned with several documents.

"Do you know the Hargrave farm of one hundred and twenty acres," he asked, calling Morey over to his desk.

"I don't know how many acres he had," answered Morey, "but Mr. Hargrave used to live next to our corn land. Don't any one live there now?"

The manager turned to Lieutenant Purcell.

"The old Richmond Trust Company made a good many peculiar loans out there in Rappahannock County. It loaned this man Appleton, who had a tobacco piece, five thousand dollars on one hundred and twenty acres. It sold the mortgage to a client of ours and he had to foreclose. I thought I recalled the transaction when your friend mentioned the Barber Bank and this man Carey. Carey bought the land less



than a year ago and paid forty dollars an acre for it."

These business details confused Morey.

"Looks as if Major Carey was out for something soft," commented Lieutenant Purcell.

"Our land's worth as much as the Appleton place," exclaimed Morey, who had grasped that much of the situation.

"Leave me your address," suggested the manager. "I'll send a man out there on a quiet investigation. These country banks are great boosters—for themselves. You'll hear from me in a few days. It isn't improbable that I can be of help to you."



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SIGNAL CORPS CAMP IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Before leaving the center of the city Lieutenant Purcell directed Morey to several cheap but sufficiently good restaurants. Then the two friends spent several hours in sight-seeing, and when they separated, Morey went directly to his room to write to his mother at last. The letter, although a long one, told only a part of Morey's story. As yet he made no mention of the money they owed Major Carey. It was an affectionate but positive letter leaving no doubt as to Morey's intentions. This letter led up to a second and more important one.

The following day, having journeyed out to Fort Meyer and secured the proper form, Morey wrote again to his mother. In this letter he asked her consent to his joining the Signal Corps. This communication was most adroitly worded. There was in it no reference to the army, and the average person who read it would imagine that the "U. S. Signal Corps" was a sort of technical school, entrance into which was secured only by a favored few.



Morey waited four days for his mother's reply. During that time he heard nothing from Major Squiers or from the real estate firm, and his expenses were already nearly twelve dollars. Then he called at the real estate office. The manager remembered him, was profuse in his apologies, but had been too busy to give the matter consideration. He would attempt to do so at once. Morey retired somewhat crestfallen. He had imagined that his business was to receive immediate attention. Not wishing to bother Lieutenant Purcell he went alone to the War Department and asked to see Major Squiers. After much delay he was admitted.

Major Squiers greeted him cordially but with every sign of having no time to lose.

"I just wanted to ask you about the papers?" Morey explained at once.

"Oh, yes," responded the military executive. "They have been submitted to the proper officials. When reports are made on them I will take the matter up with the Secretary of War. You musn't be impatient, my son. We are all the victims of red tape here in Washington."

"Have you any idea when I shall know?"

"Not the slightest—weeks perhaps; maybe



months. You had better go home in the meantime."

"I should say not," responded Morey decisively. "Don't you remember what you told me I could do? I can't afford to loaf, either here or at home. I want to enlist."

"I remember," laughed Major Squiers. "Have you your mother's formal consent?"

"I expect to have it in a day or so."

Major Squiers thought a moment. Then he turned to his desk and wrote a note.

"Why not?" he asked as he turned around and handed the envelope to Morey. "Here is a note to Lieutenant Purcell with a suggestion. If you are in the service I can the more easily keep track of you. The lieutenant is leaving in a few days for the experiment station. I have suggested that if your mother's consent arrives in time and you are formally enrolled before he leaves, he should take you with him."

"Where is the experiment station," asked Morey, boyishly.

The officer smiled.

"That is a military secret, my son."

Then Morey smiled.

After expressing his gratitude Morey withdrew. It pleased him to think that he knew



where the experiment station was. The presence of Lieutenant Purcell at Linden, only twenty miles from his home was explained. If things worked out all right, Morey figured he would be on his way there in a few days. There, with the possible chance of seeing his mother occasionally, he would study the operation of aeroplanes and would wait for some word as to his business affairs.

The next morning his mother's letter came. It was a pathetic composition, protesting, appealing and reproaching. And, although she ordered Morey to return home at once she also gave her consent that he might join the Signal Corps. The letter contained also a message from Amos' father. The substance of this was that a "hiding" awaited the colored boy.

Within an hour Morey had consulted with Lieutenant Purcell. Then he made another call at the real estate office. The manager, Morey thought, showed uncalled for impatience. It had not yet been convenient, it seemed, to look into the Marshall matter. The disappointed lad was glad to make his escape. But he left his new address: "Care Lieut. Fred Purcell, U. S. Signal Corps."

By noon he and Amos had packed up their be-



longings, eaten luncheon at one of Amos' favorite places down near the "Basin," and the adventurers were off for Fort Meyer. Morey was about to become a soldier. Amos following blindly in Morey's footsteps, supposed with his own peculiar logic that the white boy's enlistment included him. In the delusion that he, too, was about to become a soldier and don a cap and blue clothes he was happy.

Lieutenant Purcell had orders to return to Linden, or Green Springs, the real location of the encampment, at noon of the following day. And at his suggestion Morey was not formally enlisted until the next morning. All embarrassment as to Amos was soon relieved. Morey had money enough to send the black boy home by train. The officer, however, offered to attach Amos to himself as a personal servant.

"But he thinks he is to be a soldier," said Morey.

"That's all right," suggested the lieutenant, "I'll scare up an old uniform and we'll rig him out in it. It will satisfy him and do no one any harm."

This was done that evening. When the reservation ambulance started for Washington and the train at noon the next day, among the other



corps privates to be transferred to Green Springs under Sergeant Burns, was Morey, in a stiff new uniform, and with a soldier's kit. Lieutenant Purcell preceded the detachment in a 'bus and Amos went with him—in reality as the lieutenant's personal servant, but so far as the black boy knew, as much of a soldier as any in the squad. Three hours later, to Amos' consternation, the party alighted in the village of Linden. The camp wagon was waiting and long before night Lieutenant Purcell and his men were at Green Springs.

Morey was assigned to a tent with three other privates, and Amos—protesting but finally obeying Morey's orders—was located in Lieutenant Purcell's cook tent with another darkey. Amos had expected to shoulder a gun, and had visions of at once stealing away to exhibit himself in Lee's Court House. But he found the duty of waiting on Lieutenant Purcell's table more pressing.

Even a quick examination satisfied Morey that he had made no mistake. The camp and its surroundings seemed a fairy land to him. High up on the slope of the Blue Mountains, well concealed behind a barrier of mountain ash trees, lay a plateau. This plateau led into a



broad rift in the mountain. Deep in this valley, next the spring that gave the place its name, was the camp. A score of tents surrounding a square, housed the soldiers and officers selected by the War Department to be trained in the use of the aeroplane. Just below the camp and fronting a slope leading to the plateau outside were two large tents. In one of these were two aeroplanes—Wright machines—and in the other was a shop and quarters for two civilian representatives of the airship manufacturers.

Fascinated by the surroundings and the daily routine of the work Morey threw himself enthusiastically into the experiments. He was young, full of ideas and more than willing. He was assigned to the shop division and in three weeks he was as well informed on the theory and construction of an aeroplane as the experts themselves. So intent was he upon his duties that he seemed to have no thought for any thing else. But no day went by in which he did not inquire of his superior officer whether any message had come for him from Major Squiers or the real estate firm. But his frequent and keen disappointment in this hope always passed away in the fervor with which he executed his tasks. The men were not allowed to send mes-



sages from the camp. Nor were they permitted to visit Linden unless accompanied by an officer.

Lieutenant Purcell had tried several men in short flights, always making longer ones himself, generally about sundown. Morey now had his first experience in the machine. Corporal Appleton was the favored pupil. One evening early in July, Lieutenant Purcell and Corporal Appleton were preparing for a trial flight. The car was on the track, the lieutenant was in place at the levers and the corporal was just mounting alongside his superior when the latter looked up, sprang from the car and ordered Appleton away and into custody. The soldier was partly intoxicated.

Without a spoken word Lieutenant Purcell turned toward Morey and nodded his head. In another moment the young Virginian was by the officer's side, the aeroplane had been released and the craft was swirling forward and upward. Almost before Morey could catch his breath the world seemed dropping from beneath him. There was a long, slanting curve and Morey's heart almost stopped beating. He closed his eyes and gripped the fragile frame. A cold sweat covered his body. Again the car swayed. The boy, almost dizzy with fear, gasped and



bit his lips. The whirr of the propellers filled the air. Then, suddenly, came the sense of smoothness, the absence of vibration, the feeling that without jar or quiver the delicate vehicle was floating.

At last Morey opened his eyes. He closed them quickly. So far beneath them that the sense of height was almost sickening, the plain and forest were rushing by with the speed of an express. But he began to reason. He had at last achieved a step in his ambition. With all the grit he had he pulled himself together. Again he opened his eyes—this time to keep them open. His companion was not afraid. Why should he be?

“How is she doing?” he exclaimed suddenly, surprised at his own calmness.

“Beautifully. Watch me!”

And the boy did. Far out over the forest in the gathering twilight the aeroplane flew like a disc. Then the aviator turned to the south. At this long swoop the sickening depression came again into Morey’s breast, but only for a moment.

“It’s this or nothing, for me,” he said to himself and with a last effort he put aside his fear.



“Look ahead,” exclaimed Lieutenant Purcell suddenly. “See something white?”

“Looks like a building.”

“Top of the courthouse in your village.”

Five miles toward the village the aeroplane flew and then Lieutenant Purcell turned once more. Just at dusk the airship sank gently to the earth in front of the camp. Amos grabbed Morey as a mother might clasp a lost child. He was blubbing and breathless. The black boy had chased the aeroplane and was almost exhausted.

“Marse Morey,” he panted, “ef yo’ all ebber go in that hurricane agin I’s gwine right home and tell yo’ ma.”

Morey had another opportunity the next day. Appleton was in disgrace. Morey was given his place and in the evening, after another short flight with Lieutenant Purcell, he was allowed to make a trial flight alone near the ground. In the week that followed Morey made daily flights—at last over the adjacent forest. His skill and confidence grew with every ascent. Lieutenant Purcell was not disappointed in his pupil. He had already assured the boy of a promotion to a sergeancy. Morey’s proud satisfaction had only one cloud on it—still no



word came from Washington concerning his business negotiations.

On the morning of July 13, Morey was summoned to headquarters. Lieutenant Purcell greeted him with a sober face.

"Morey," he said at once, "I have a disagreeable duty to perform. You will remember that it was not on my advice that you joined the Corps. Yet, I have done all I could to teach you what we know. In my judgment you have been too apt a pupil. Major Squiers has just made a requisition on me for my best operator. You are not only my best, but you are practically the only one I can trust."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the boy. "But what makes your duty disagreeable?"

"Because I must conscientiously recommend you to Major Squiers."

Morey's eyes opened in surprise.

"Isn't that a compliment?"

"It is a dangerous job. They are going to begin experimenting with explosives and their effects when dropped from aeroplanes."

"Good!" exclaimed Morey. "Do you mean that I'm to have a chance at this?"

"I must submit your name. But it is exceedingly hazardous work. You can take or refuse



the offer. Appleton is ready to go if you don't."

"When do I start?" was the boy's only answer.

"Whoever I send must be in Arlington, New Jersey, tomorrow. You'll have to start on the slow train this evening and leave Washington on the six o'clock express in the morning."

As Morey grasped his lieutenant's hand in both of his he said:

"Lieutenant, you're a brick. You've certainly done your share in trying to turn a foolish boy into a good man."



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE AEROPLANE AS A WAR MACHINE.

The government had selected an old colonial home, sequestered in a bit of forest a few miles south of Arlington, as a base for its practical aeroplane experiments. It had selected this place for two important reasons. The house, now almost in ruins, was on a ridge just beyond the tidal flats or salt marshes west of New York, and it fronted on what had been a plaza. This made an admirable starting ground and from it there was an uninterrupted but distant view of the sea. From this leafy retreat, well off the main road and only approached over a now weed-grown lane, closely guarded, the airships could emerge in the early dawn or at twilight, sail over the untenanted marshes and return, practically without being observed.

The house, which had an old-fashioned, glassless octagonal observatory on top, was further screened from discovery by a new fence. On the building itself there had been but few repairs made. Major Squiers and Lieutenant Purcell, when they were there, occupied adjoin-



ing rooms on the first floor. No attempt had been made to furnish these. The officers practically "camped out" in the big, bare rooms. On the second floor were a dozen or more soldiers, including three sergeants and a corporal. The two men who assisted Mr. Wright at Fort Meyer were also here. In the yard in the rear was a cook tent. The men ate in another tent beneath the trees.

Beyond the tents, and approached by a path running through denser trees and a wilderness of weedy vegetation, was the plaza, or outlook, on which the long since dead owner had been accustomed to sniff the ocean breezes and from which, far across the marshy meadows the ocean might be seen.

Into this interesting place Morey was conducted by Corporal Steele early in the day. Major Squiers was there and in charge. Lieutenant Purcell was expected in three or four days. The boy was turned over at once to Sergeant McLean, who took him to the commander's apartment.

"Since you are now all here," said Major Squiers, turning to the sergeant, after a few moment's talk with Morey, "you may as well draw lots for the order in which you are to be



called. We may make a flight at any time. Some officials from Washington will arrive tomorrow or the day after. When they do, we must be ready to begin work at once."

These flights were for the purpose of navigating, if possible, an aeroplane from the Arlington ridge, across the marshes, over Staten Island and then dropping explosives on a target in the Lower Bay, south of Staten Island. This target was a condemned man-of-war, which for several weeks had been mysteriously anchored off the shore. In order not to attract undue attention the vessel was manned. But officers and men were prepared to abandon the hulk at any time on signal.

The aeroplane shed was a canvas house on the garden plaza. By its side was a shop. The aeroplane tested at Fort Meyer was installed here with a second one on the ground in crates. This one had just arrived. The plans of the War Department were twofold. Not only were various explosives to be tested by being dropped from a swiftly flying car, but some of the actual conditions of war were to be present. It was especially desired to make the experiment cover some ground. The distance from the Arlington ridge to the Lower Bay was nearly twenty miles.



It was believed that if this distance could be covered by a machine without descending and a safe return accomplished, that some of the exigencies of actual warfare would have been met.

Morey was sent to the upper floor to install himself. While he was picking out a cot he was recalled to the commander's apartment. A drawing of lots was to take place to decide the order in which the four available operators would be called on to serve.

"First," explained Major Squiers, "although you are all soldiers, not one of whom would shirk his duty, the department wants to make this fact plain. This work is so new and so hazardous that it is to be the policy of the Secretary of War to call for volunteers in aeroplaning. In actual warfare it is not impossible that weapons of defense will be at once devised that will make the work of an aeroplane almost a deliberate sacrifice of life. If any one of you wishes to wait until the science we are developing is more advanced and aviation of this sort is attended with less danger, do not be ashamed to say so. It will not be charged against you."

Four men smiled.



“As I anticipated,” said Major Squiers, smiling in turn. “All of you are eager Hobsons.”

As a result of the drawing the order was:

1st. Corporal D. M. Steele, 26 years old, Omaha, Nebraska (the dirigible experimental station).

2nd. Private Mortimer Marshall, 18 years old, Green Springs’ testing grounds.

3rd. Sergeant S. A. McLean, 37 years old, Fort Meyer.

4th. P. S. Bloom, 29 years old, Fort Meyer.

As the men filed out of the room Major Squiers detained Morey a moment.

“I’m rather glad, my son, you were not first.”

“But, I’m second,” proudly replied the boy. “I’ll show you that Lieutenant Purcell is a good teacher.”

“By the way,” added his superior, “don’t believe that your father’s project has been buried. It has reached the engineering department. Unofficially I hear that it has made a sensation. That is, it has started a hot dispute. That looks good, doesn’t it?”

“It doesn’t look as good to me as this,” said Morey, holding up his little square of cardboard numbered ‘2.’ “I hope it is of use and is worth



something, but I wouldn't trade my chance here for all the money it may bring."

"How is that?" inquired Major Squiers, puzzled.

"Because I want to do something myself."

"When your chance comes I'm sure you will," said the elder man very kindly, and he patted the boy on the head.

Before the first flight was made Lieutenant Purcell arrived—three days later—and the next day a sudden message came that the official board was on the proving ground on the south shore of Staten Island. There was hurry and anxiety but no commotion in the distant New Jersey station. At six in the afternoon Corporal Steele, bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves, made a short experimental flight. Major Squiers had left the camp at four o'clock to board a waiting tug at Jersey City. At twenty minutes past six, after a safe return to the plaza, where he took on two cordite bombs weighing thirty pounds each, the eager aviator was off like a bird over the Jersey flats. At half past six he had disappeared in the smoke wafting southward from Jersey City.

Just after seven o'clock Lieutenant Purcell received this message by telephone:



“Steele’s flight was admirable but he failed in his drop. Both bombs delivered at once and too soon. They struck the water and disappeared without exploding. If he returns successfully and there is time before dark, make a second trial. Attempt nothing after dark. Take no chances with shipping in the bay.”

Corporal Steele was on the starting plateau at a quarter past seven. The operator was chagrined, but not discouraged. His control of the machine had been perfect. He at once insisted that there should be an automatic device for releasing the explosive independently of the operator’s hands. But, in the midst of his explanation, Lieutenant Purcell turned to Morey. There was at least three quarters of an hour of twilight remaining. The aeroplane was turned, two new bombs were hastily brought and Morey got into the seat.

His great chance had come at last. Calmly and distinctly he gave the word and the car was hurled into the still evening air. Taking ad-obedient aeroplane to mount upward as it flew through the almost breezeless air. Up and up he soared until the grey marsh beneath was only a haze. A thousand feet above the tidewater vantage of his start Morey held his forward or



horizontal rudder skyward and allowed the swamp the young aviator brought himself to a horizontal course. Before and beyond him he could make out the horizon-bounded sea. In a few moments the outlines of Staten Island became clear in the dusk and then the unmistakable grey target rose out of the water beyond.

The two bombs had been suspended in little net hammocks on each side of the aviator. On each was a wire handle. Morey reached into his pocket and took out his new knife. Opening the largest blade he placed the knife between his teeth. Then carefully, while some distance from the target vessel, he drew the other bomb from its hammock and placed it in his lap. He was ready.

A thousand yards from the anchored marsh he settled himself and judged his distance. He was counting on some breeze at sea. He could feel it gently wafting landward from the northeast. His experience at Green Springs had taught him every movement of the machine. As he drew nearer to the vessel he bore off into the breeze as if to pass to one side of the target. He seemed about to sail by it on the north when with a quick shift of his vertical rudders he turned. The aeroplane trembled, seemed to



catch itself for a moment and then, with a long, graceful curve it headed for the vessel and darted downward like a bird.

There was another rapid movement of the horizontal rudders and the darting fall was checked. The airship wavered as if to gather itself for a new flight. The swiftly beating propellers sent the air against the planes and the machine began to rise once more. There was an instant's pause. The boy's hand shot forward to cut away the hanging bomb with the keen blade. At the same instant Morey's knees opened and the deadly package in his lap slid between his legs. Almost at the same moment the two bombs crashed upon the steel deck and the aeroplane had darted on.

There was a roar, a flash of fire far beneath, and Morey knew that he had made the first successful experiment with the aeroplane as a war machine; he had won "in the clouds for Uncle Sam."



## CHAPTER XVIII

### SERGEANT MARSHALL OUTWITS MAJOR CAREY.

The maneuvers continued with daily flights. In a short time Morey was, by common consent, conceded to be the foremost in the work. He held the record for the most exact work in the handling of explosives and had flown the highest. Sergeant McLean made the longest continuous flight—the length of Long Island and return.

The promised promotion to a sergeancy came at the end of the first week of experimenting. In his new stripes the boy had visible proof that the “foolish boy” had really made progress in his effort to accomplish something. Then, one morning came a shock. He received a letter from his mother.

No sooner had Lieutenant Purcell left the Green Spring’s camp than Amos disappeared. As he was not a soldier, little attention was given his departure. Reaching Aspley Place after a footsore tramp, the black boy was received with open arms. Even his father, old



Marsh Green, agreed to refrain from administering the "hiding" he had promised. As Amos related to Morey's mother the wonders he had seen and the exploits of the yet missing white boy his imagination ran riot. Old Don Quixote never shone with the glamor of romance that the black boy created for Morey. Mrs. Marshall was in despair. And other things had now arisen that made her son's absence doubly trying.

Amos had no idea where Morey had gone. But Mrs. Marshall's letter of appeal to her son was forwarded to Green Springs in care of Lieutenant Purcell and from that place it was forwarded to the station at Arlington. When Morey read it he was in despair.

"My dear Morey," it ran. "How can I say what your absence has been to me! Amos has told us all. I am heartbroken that you did not return with him. I thought you were in school at Washington. He tells me you are a soldier. Twice I have written to you in Washington and each time my letter has come back. You must come to me at once. Mr. Bradner has told me all. I cannot understand it, but he says we must give up our home; that Major Carey and Captain Barber are arranging to get for



us a new home in the village. This cannot be necessary, but he says I must. It is something about money that your father owed. Now they say we can no longer live on Aspley Place. Major Carey has been to see me. He says it is true; that some one in Richmond insists on having money that I cannot pay. He has selected a little cottage where we must live—but I cannot write of it. Won't you come home and help me?"

The glory of his success in the corps seemed very small to Morey then. When he thought over what had happened in the last few weeks he could only reproach himself with the thought that he had deserted his mother. He at once sought out Major Squiers. To him he told his story.

"May I go home for a few days?" he pleaded. "I know now that I did wrong to enlist. But I've got to go home and see what I can do."

"I'll give you leave of absence for a week," answered his superior sympathetically. "If, at the end of that time you want more leave let me know and I'll grant it. But you did not do wrong. You are going to be a credit to yourself and to your mother."

"I'm going to Washington," said Morey



tremulously. "If nothing can be done there I'll go home. With what I know I'll confront the men who are trying to rob us. I'm sure I'm enough older now to accomplish something."

"You must," replied Major Squiers, "for I have counted on you in my summer plans. You have become valuable to us. Arrange to rejoin the corps by the first of August—you cannot afford to miss what I have arranged for you."

At three o'clock that afternoon the disconsolate boy was in Washington on his way home on a leave of absence. Hastening to the office of the real estate firm he met the manager just leaving for the day.

"I meant to write to you in the morning," began the busy dealer with unusual condescension. "I have a proposition to make to you and your mother. Jump in my car! I'm going out for a little ride. We'll talk it over in the automobile."

Morey's heart leaped.

"I'll be perfectly frank with you," said the manager, "and what I have to say is based on the assumption that you represent your mother."

"I think you can do that, sir," replied Morey. "She has not authorized me to act for her, but



our necessities are such that I must compel her to listen to reason."

"Well," began the agent, "we have had a man in your part of the country and he has just returned. It was not difficult to find that the Barber Bank is preparing to secure your land. We are like the Barber Bank, in a way. We are here to make money where and when we can. The land is ample security for the loan you ask."

"And you'll let me have it?" exclaimed Morrey.

The manager shook his head.

The lad's heart sank.

"What we will do is this: Major Carey wants your land, that is plain. I think, too, he'll pay forty dollars an acre for it when he sees he has to. My proposition is this: we'll take up your notes—your father's and your mother's—and, if your mother will make such a contract, carry them until we can sell the property. As our profit we will take one-half the selling price over the amount we invest. That will be something over \$14,000. If we sell the farm of six hundred acres at forty dollars there will be a balance of \$10,000 over what we put in



the deal. That will mean \$5,000 for your mother and \$5,000 for us."

Morey finally understood, then he too shook his head.

"I can't," he said. "I reckon your offer is fair enough but I can't let the home farm go. That's what I'm working for. There are one hundred and sixty acres around our home that I want to keep—that I must save. You know the place. There are four hundred and forty acres besides this. If you'll pay those notes I'll undertake to see that my mother gives you a deed to all this."

"I don't see that it makes much difference," said the manager.

"It makes all the difference in the world to me. It won't give us any money but it will give us a home. And I'll make a living somehow."

"I'll do it. Your friends in the Barber Bank are sharks. I like to take a fall out of those country wise ones occasionally."

"Mr. Tuttle," said Morey, after a few moments, "that's business and no favor on either side. I'm going to ask a personal favor. I'm too young to ask it legally but on what you know of me will you lend me \$100."

The manager smiled.



“Our investment company would not think of such a thing. But we are not in the office just now. Your note wouldn’t be good, but your face is.” He reached in his pocket, took out a wallet, counted out five twenty-dollar bills and then laid on them his personal card, J. D. Tuttle. “When you can do so, send it to me. Haven’t you any funds?”

“Enough to get home,” responded Morey, “but I’m going to pay a fine with part of that and keep out of jail.”

“A fine? For what?”

“I bumped old Judge Lomax, in our town, on the floor because he said our place wasn’t worth twenty dollars an acre.”

“Whew!” laughed the manager. “I’m glad I valued it higher.”

Arrangements were soon concluded. When Morey left for Lee’s Court House in the morning an agent of the investment company was with him. They reached the little Rappahannock County town at about eleven o’clock. One of Marshal Robertson’s self-imposed duties was to conscientiously attend the arrival of each train. The marshal was dutifully on the platform.

“Do you want me?” asked Morey, hurrying up to the guardian of the peace.



The boy's natty uniform, his new cap and his sergeant's stripes seemed to overpower the town official.

"'Fur poundin' up Jedge Lomax?" he stammered at last.

"You can call it that," laughed Morey, "although I didn't."

"'Fur land's sakes, Morey, where ha' ye abeen? That's all settled long ago. I reckon your mother must a' got Major Carey to see Jedge Lomax. Anyhow the warrant is withdrew."

That was what had happened. As soon as Mrs. Marshall had heard of the difficulty she had hurried to her friends, Captain Barber and Major Carey. Through them the disgruntled Lomax—who never had been near to dying—had been unable to resist feminine appeals, particularly when Major Carey added his request to that of Morey's mother.

"Well," said Morey with decision, "I think that is a good thing—for Judge Lomax. I was just about to swear out a warrant for his arrest. I'll wait now until I hear more from him."

The investment company's representative was a young lawyer. Morey's mother had no telephone in her house. So within a few minutes



the town livery man had two horses hitched to an ancient hack and by noon Morey and the agent were at Aspley Place.

For half an hour Morey was alone with his mother in her bed room. In the end she was reconciled. Morey did not attempt to make her realize all that he had come to know.

"I'll never believe it of Major Carey," she kept repeating.

"That's all right, mater," Morey answered at last. "Think as you like. But I'm a man now. All you have to do is to sign the contract. I'll see that you keep Aspley Place. And, if I have good luck, I'll see that we make our own butter again."

"I'm afraid it isn't what your father would have liked."

"Father lived when things were different. Everything has changed. I'm changed."

By mid-afternoon Morey and the agent were in Major Carey's office. The news of Morey's return had spread quickly. The dignified planter-banker was not at his ease. He began the interview by mildly censuring the boy for his sudden leave-taking. Then he seemed to desire to mend matters a little by explaining how he had adjusted the trouble with Judge Lo-



max. Morey heard him impatiently and then came to the point.

"I suppose you remember what I said to you the last time I saw you?" began Morey.

"You were not wholly in command of yourself," replied Major Carey, condescendingly.

"I told you when I entered your office again that I'd be here to settle with you. I'm ready."

"To settle with me?"

"With you, Captain Barber, Mr. Bradner, the bank, or any one else that has a claim against my mother."

"Morey, what does this mean?"

"It means that you folks think you own this town and all the people in it. You do, too, pretty much—except us. Produce your statement of every cent we owe you. I want the notes and have the money to square up."

"Mr. Betts," said Major Carey, nervously, "does this boy know what he is talking about?"

"Looks like it?" laughed the young lawyer, taking a blue envelope from his pocket in which the Virginian could not fail to note an ample supply of currency. "We were afraid the Barber Bank might not like the looks of our check."

Major Carey, red in the face and thick of speech, sprang to his feet.



"This is a bluff," he exclaimed. "What are you trying to do?"

"Not trying," said Morey in turn, and himself white about the mouth. "I'm just taking up my mother's obligations. Then her farm will be clear and free from debt."

The planter sank back in his chair.

"You should have talked to me about this, Morey. I'd have bought that land from you."

"You can get it yet," smiled Morey. "It'll be on the market in a few days. The price is fifty dollars an acre, cash."

Major Carey was upset. He retired to the bank below and returned in a few moments with Mr. Bradner, his son-in-law. But the latter was equally disturbed. There was nothing to do but produce the notes and prepare a statement. The moment this was ready Morey interrupted the proceedings again.

"Are you ready to make your settlement for the rent of the corn land, Major Carey?"

This was a bombshell. There were futile and foolish arguments about "favor to Mrs. Marshall to prevent the place going to weeds," "high taxes," "fence repairs," and "poor crops."



“Take ’em all out,” retorted Morey, sharply. “I only want what is ours.”

Major Carey had to beg for time until morning to consult his receipts and farm books. Another meeting was arranged for the next day at ten o’clock.

At that time, taking his own unquestioned figures and allowing him half the crops for two years—deducting forty acres of waste land and an array of expenses that made Mr. Betts smile, Major Carey was compelled to concede that there was a surplus of \$4,160 to be divided.

Morey’s pencil was out.

“We owe you,” he said sharply, “\$14,092.50. You owe us \$2,080. The difference is \$12,012.50. Here’s your money.”

The disconcerted planter sat for a spell as if in a trance.

“How about this year’s corn crop?” he murmured at last.

“I am now interested in this property Major Carey,” explained the agent. “Since you have put in a crop without even the formality of renting the ground you will certainly lose it.”

By night the transaction was closed and Mr. Betts left on the evening train. He had turned over \$2,080, the corn land rental to Mrs. Mar-



shall and Morey had taken from it a hundred dollars to be paid to Mr. Tuttle in Washington.

The next day Morey entered the Barber Bank and deposited his mother's rental money to her account. Captain Barber treated him with a cold dignity. Almost out of the door the boy turned:

"By the way, Captain Barber. Our land is on the market. If you know any one who wants it they can have it at a bargain, \$50 an acre."

With his mother's home and one hundred and sixty acres clear of debt, \$2,000 in the bank and the possibility of perhaps \$3,000 more from the sale of the rest of the farm, Morey at once prepared to return to the Signal Corps. It was almost against his mother's command, but she finally reluctantly consented. The day before his leave expired he drove their new horse and buggy to Lee's Court House to secure a man to help Marsh Green in needed work on the place. Amos was with him.

"Marse Morey," exclaimed the black boy, "dey done say dat yo' all got plenty money now."

Morey, his mind on something else, answered:

"I've got my pay as a soldier."

Amos sighed.



“Ain’ dat nuff to pay me mah money what yo’ all loan’ from me?”

Morey laughed and then he grew sober. He had wholly forgotten the one person who had helped him when he most needed assistance.

“What is a banjo worth, Amos?” he asked.

“Ah kin git one fo’ foah dollahs an’ two bits.”

“Here,” exclaimed the white boy, taking a treasured twenty dollar bill from his pocket. “This is for what I borrowed and a banjo and all the cinnamon drops you can eat.”

As Morey entered the bank a little later on some business for his mother, he was overtaken by the station agent and telegraph operator, who was in a state of high excitement and out of breath. The man had a carefully sealed telegram in his hand, but from his face it could be seen that he knew every word of its contents. Major Carey had just come downstairs from his office. He had been making desperate efforts when he met Morey, to reinstate himself in the lad’s good graces.

“Official orders, I reckon?” exclaimed the banker.

Morey read the following:

“Sergeant Mortimer Marshall:

Department reports favorably. Offers \$25,-



000 outright for secret. Acceptance must be by widow. Congratulations. Report at Fort Meyer August sixth. Detailed on squad leaving for France August eighth to witness French war office aeroplane trials.

SQUIERS,  
Major U. S. Signal Corps.

Morey, excited inwardly, but apparently calm, handed the message to Major Carey.

"Are you going to get all that money from the government?" the latter asked.

"My mother is," smiled Morey proudly. "It isn't mine and I don't want it. I'm satisfied to be just Sergeant Morey Marshall of the Signal Corps."

[THE END.]

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